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NEW

NICK CARTER

WEEKLY

A MILLION DOLLAR HOLD-UP

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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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A MILLION-DOLLAR HOLD-UP;

OR,

NICK CARTER AFTER THE TRAIN ROBBERS.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE HOLD-UP ON THE S. M. & U. R. R.

There is a section of the Salt Mountain and Ubidalla Railroad where it winds its snakelike course through a southern spur of the mountains which, upon a map where it is printed plainly, makes the curve of the tracks represent an exact horseshoe. There is a still more remarkable representation of a horseshoe in the shaping of the road, if one should care to study it out carefully. That is, there are three mountains bordering upon it that are higher than their neighbors and they are so placed that they precisely represent the heel and toe-corks of the iron shoe.

If you will trace out with your pencil a line to represent a horseshoe, you will see exactly what is meant.

On the railroad itself barely two miles of distance separate the two high mountains that form the heel-corks, and as they are located on exactly the same meridian, they are called the North Cork and the South Cork, respectively; the third of the high mountains, being located exactly at the middle of the curve of the shoe, is known as the Toe Cork.

From the beginning of the curve at the North Cork, around to the end of the curve at the South Cork, the distance is seventeen miles, and it is eight and a half miles from either of these to Toe Cork.

At Toe Cork a narrow walled cañon puts into the big basin which forms the horseshoe, and all the way around the curve from one cork to the last one the depth of this basin is approximately four hundred feet.

The cañon referred to, which puts in at the Toe Cork, is perhaps a hundred feet wide at the bottom, but it is one of those formations which narrow as it ascends, so that at the top, a thousand feet in the air, the distance across it is not more than fifty feet.

The consequence of this is that it is always quite dark down at the bottom of Devil's Cañon, as it is locally called.

The fast train from the West passes through the horseshoe very early in the day, during the first part of the month of October, and on this particular 7th day of that month it entered at North Cork just as day was breaking, and, therefore, arrived at Devil's Cañon, near Toe Cork, about half an hour later, because trains are forced to move at reduced speed upon that particular section of the road.

Bill Duffy, the engineer, was leaning out of the

window of his cab, taking in full breaths of the crisp morning air, just as they were approaching the Devil's Cañon; but he suddenly jerked it in again, and with lightninglike swiftness closed the throttle of his engine and set the brakes. The consequence was that the train came to a stop so quickly that every soul aboard the cars knew that something had happened.

Bill Duffy had discovered what appeared to be a huge rock lying directly between the rails, just beyond the entrance to the cañon, and at the top of the rock somebody had fixed a red flannel shirt, in lieu of a danger-signal.

So nearly did the locomotive approach the obstruction that only a few yards separated them when the train finally came to a stop, and then five masked men appeared suddenly from the cañon, and while one of them, at the muzzle of a revolver, calmly ordered Bill Duffy and his fireman to get down out of the cab, the others, two on either side of the train, ran back along the track to attend to the rest of the business of the hold-up.

Hold-up it was; there could be no doubt of that.

"Bill Duffy," said the lone man who remained on guard over the engine, "are you going to be good and obey orders, or do you want me to drill yeh?"

"I'll be good, all right," was the engineer's reply; "and say, mister hold-up man, your voice sounds familiar to me a-plenty."

"I reckon it may be, Bill. You an' me is old pals."

"Well, I'm blowed, I am!" ejaculated the engineer. "If that ain't Cal Barclay's voice, I'll eat my hat."

"You won't have to, Bill. I'm Cal, all right."

"Yeh don't say. I thought you was in Argentine. Some folks said as how you was dead, but I knew better than that. So you're back, eh?"

"Yep."

"Look here, Cal, what in thunder are yeh wastin' your time holdin' up this train for? We don't carry anything valuable on this trip. You are so old a hand that you ought to know it, seems to me."

Cal Barclay did not reply immediately, for the sound of several pistol-shots came to them from the rear of the train at that moment.

He appeared to pay very little attention to them, however; but Duffy was disturbed.

"Do you s'pose they've plugged somebody?" he asked.

Barclay shrugged his shoulders.

"That's hard to say," he replied. "I told the boys to shoot if anybody got fresh; but I reckon it's only a scare-shot."

"We've got a new conductor on this train, Cal, and I don't know him well enough to know how he'd act in a hold-up. He's been doing some tall talking about what he *would* do if his train was ever held up, but——"

"Well, you can bet your pile that if he has talked about it, he won't do anything. Them sort never do. I don't s'pose you happen to know, Bill, if there is anything of value in the express-car."

"I don't know a blooming thing about it; and I wouldn't tell you, Cal, if I did."

"Of course not, Bill. I'd think you were a new man, too, if yeh did. Hello; here comes my man Pete to relieve me. Remember Pete, Bill?"

"Pete Balzer? Your side partner?"

"Sure."

"'Course I remember him."

"Well, I'll leave him to stand guard over you for a while until I finish up the first part of the business that brought me here. And say, you know Pete! Don't get fresh with him, for he has been in a bad temper lately. He's likely to shoot sudden, if he's provoked."

"Oh, I know him."

Cal Barclay, train-robber,* and all-around bad man of the West, nodded to his pal when that individual approached, and with a jerk of his head toward Duffy, announced:

"Old acquaintance uh your'n, Pete;" then with his forty-five still in his grasp, he walked along the track beside the cars until he encountered another of his men who was standing where he could keep his eyes toward the rear of the train, ready to send a bullet along past the car steps at any instant.

"You can follow me inside, Bing," he said, and swung himself upon the steps of the car. "Plug the first gazabo who shows sass, Bing."

"I will, all right. Don't you get that out uh your mind, Cal," was the reply.

And so they entered the car which happened to be the smoker, and was located next to the rear of the baggage-car.

As Cal stepped inside of it he seemed not to be armed; but directly behind him loomed the tall form of Bing Scott, and he had a gun which covered every person in that car.

"Gentlemen," said Cal, in his drawling voice, and with a suggestion of humor in the snap of his bright black eyes, "if yeh set still an' take yeh medicine solemn an' easy, nobody's goin' teh hurt yeh; but if

*See No. 614 of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

yeh get obstreperous, look out. There is or should be a friend uh mine aboard this train, and I'm here to get him. Incidentally, if you'll shell out what small valuables yeh happen to have about yeh, I'll be obliged. Mr. Scott'll pass the hat an' take up the collection, and it'll be plumb unhealthy if any of you offer objections."

He passed down the aisle after that, receiving the "donations" as he went along, and dropping them into the hat that Bing carried; and he had passed in that manner almost to the other end of the car before he spoke again.

Then, however, he bent forward and shook a man who had continued to sleep through all the disturbance.

"Wake up, Tom Morgan!" he called; and the man thus aroused opened his eyes and half started to his feet.

But he sank back almost instantly, muttering as he did so; and it could be seen that he wore handcuffs on his wrists and that he was a prisoner of the man who was seated beside him, and who had remained perfectly silent and still all the time, although his face had gone deadly white since the first sound of Cal Barclay's voice penetrated the length of the car.

But to him Cal seemed to pay no attention whatever. One could not have told that he even looked at the man. All of his regard was devoted to Morgan.*

The man addressed as Tom Morgan was still muttering to himself; there was a vacant stare in his eyes as if he did not entirely comprehend what was going on around him.

"Don't yeh know me, Tom?" asked Barclay; but before there was time for a reply he wheeled and glanced up and down the car again. "Bing," he added, "shoot the first gazabo that makes an unpleasant move. Now, Tom Morgan, don't you remember Cal Barclay?"

Something like recognition came into the vacant eyes of the shackled man. Then he smiled, and after a moment of silence, during which everybody in the car seemed to listen, he replied:

"Sure I know yeh, Cal. Whatcher doin' here?"

"I've come after you, Tom."

"I reckon mebby you'd better leave me alone, Cal," was the response to that announcement. "I ain't well. There's something the matter with my head. It goes all wrong at times, and when it does I want to kill folks. Better leave me."

"Not by a long shot. I don't desert old pals that way. Not much. You're comin' along with my outfit, and we'll take good care of you. I was told that they was going to put you into an asylum along with a lot uh locoed mavericks, and that don't go. You're going to have the free mountain air and plenty uh room to graze in. Wouldn't yeh rather be with me than with a lot uh strangers?"

"I reckon I would, Cal."

"Then get onto your feet. That's right. Now, Mr. Sheriff, *you stand up, too.*"

It was surprising how quickly the official got upon his feet; but even then Cal Barclay seemed not to look at him.

"I suppose, Sheriff, yeh can unlock them irons, can't yeh?" he asked.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Well, get busy; and, say, when you're lookin' for them keys, don't try to pull any gun, will yeh? 'cause if yeh do——!"

He did not finish the sentence, but it wasn't necessary that he should do so. The meaning was sufficiently plain.

*See No. 614, NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

CHAPTER II.

A DUEL IN THE MOUNTAINS.

The bunch of keys, containing among others that one which fitted the locks of the irons on Morgan's wrists, was speedily forthcoming, although the hands of the sheriff trembled perceptibly when he produced them.

"Here are the keys," he said.

"Well, Sheriff, I reckon you're more used to manipulatin' 'em that I am. Unlock them irons, and do it sudden!"

The sheriff did as he was ordered to do, and then, still ignoring him, Cal addressed the freed prisoner again.

"Tom," he said, "you mosey out uh the car now. You'll find some uh the boyees yeh know, a-waitin' outside, and there's more of 'em in the cañon near-by. They'll tell yeh what to do, and I'll be with yeh in a few minutes. I've got a little business to transact with this thing that calls itself a sheriff."

The sheriff gasped, and his face became paler than ever.

He watched the train-robber with fascinated eyes while Morgan walked the length of the car and finally disappeared through the door; but he did not utter a word. Doubtless he realized the utter futility of doing so.

It was not until Morgan had disappeared from the car that Barclay again gave his attention to the sheriff, although, all the time since Morgan started away, he had kept his eyes on the man. Now he spoke, and in that level, drawling tone of voice, which some of the old-time Western characters know how to make so menacing.

"Now, Sheriff Al Pavey, I'm ready to talk to you," he said. "I wonder what you reckon I'd ought to do to you?"

"I suppose you're going to kill me, Cal," was the half-hearted reply; "although there ain't no reason why you should."

"Al Pavey, you're a liar, and you know it. If you'd only done your duty, I'd be the last man on top uh earth to hold anything against yeh for it. You know that, too."

The man did not reply.

"Don't you? Say?"

"Yes, Cal, I do know it."

"That's right. Speak up. I reckon mebbe I'd ought to tell all these gentlemen here just what it was you done. Mebbe if I do that they'll understand better what I do to you later on. Stand up, Al Pavey! Stand up, I say!"

The sheriff started to his feet and stood there trembling. Barclay addressed himself to the passengers in the car.

"Gentlemen," he said, "do you all see this thing here that calls itself a man? I reckon yeh do. Well, I am Cal Barclay, and I suppose some of you have heard of me. Four years ago I was wanted bad by this chap. There was a price on me, and this thing wanted to get it. He took after me through the mountains, and I let him come up with me twice, so's I could talk with him. You'll allow, when you've heard all I'm tellin' you, that I'd oughter killed him then and there; but I didn't. I warned him away, and told him to seek some other climate; but he didn't go.

"I had some friends then, and one of 'em was the widow of an old pal of mine. She was a nice gal, too. They don't make 'em any better or any purtier than she was. She's dead now. She was livin' at that time, on a little ranch I owned, and I used to find chances to go and see her sometimes, when the officers wasn't too hot on my trail. Most of them officers were purty good fellers, and they didn't bother me much when I was layin off, to see the only people who cared for me. That girl was like a sister to me. She made me think of another girl; one I left back East.

"But this here galoot—what do yeh s'pose he done? I'll tell yeh. He took a lot uh some kind uh stuff that made him deadly sick for about an hour, and he worked it so's he was close to that ranch when he was took. Uh course he asked for help and he was given a bed, and that girl waited on him and nursed him all that afternoon, although she knowed that I was due there that evenin'; but she reckoned this galoot was sick, and that he'd at least be a gent about what happened.

"Well, I ain't goin' to detain yeh very long about this story; but the upshot of it was that Pavey got better nighty sudden, and when I arrived at the house about dark, he jumps off'n the couch where he was layin' and pulls a gun on me, thinkin' he's got the drop—which he didn't have, and which no man ain't never got yet, up to the present writin'.

"Well, I didn't see his gun. I went for him just the same—and he pulled. He missed, too. I reckon he was scared so bad he couldn't shoot. Anyhow, I grabbed him, but he jerked away, and as he did so he let fly another bullet. It didn't hit me, but it did hit the girl. She had to have her arm amputated as a result of that shot—and Al Pavey got away. I ain't never met up with him since that time, either. He'll tell you that. My little friend got well uh the wound, but she sickened an' died the following year. I ain't laying her death to Pavey; but am chargin' him with the loss uh her arm; and likewise a heap uh sufferin'. Ain't that all true, Pavey? Answer!"

"Yes," was the trembling admission.

"Well, you turn your back and walk out uh this car."

"Don't murder me! Oh, don't murder me!"

"Murder you, you maverick? Not much. I'm goin' to give you a chance for your life, the same as if you was a man—which you ain't. Now, walk."

Before Barclay followed, he once more addressed the passengers.

"Them as wants to step outside and see fair play here, is invited," he said; then he followed the sheriff.

Instead of five robbers, there were now half a score, for others had been hidden in the cañon when the train was stopped.

"Now, Pavey," said Barclay when they were well outside the car, "you've got a gun on your hip which you ain't had the courage to pull, and which I was too considerate to take from you. You an' me'll stand back to back, right here. Bing Scott'll be umpire. These gentlemen'll all be witnesses. Bing'll say

'Ready!' and then he'll begin to count, 'One, Two, Three,' and so on, till he gets up to ten. While he's countin', you and me'll walk away from each other, and when he says 'Ten,' we'll both turn and shoot. If you get me, I'm willin'; if I get you, these gentlemen'll be able to say I gave you fair play, and more show for your life than you deserved."

"But look here, Cal, I don't want——"

"Begin, Bing!" Barclay interrupted him. "If he don't do as I said—that's his lookout."

And Bing did begin.

He shouted "Ready!" so that all could hear him, and immediately began the count; and so perforce the sheriff was obliged to do as he had been told.

Amid a breathless silence, save for the sound of the counting in Bing's deep voice, the two men began to walk away from each other; but at the instant when Bing said "Nine!" the sheriff wheeled and fired, without waiting for the word that had been agreed upon.

There was a groan went up from every man there; but it was interrupted by two more sharp reports in quick succession, as Barclay wheeled and returned the fire; and he stood where he was, uninjured, while the sheriff, who had used him so badly, tottered to the ground.

Then Cal Barclay held up one hand and called out:

"I ain't hurt him so's but what he'll get over it. Although he fired before the time, he didn't hit me; but if you-all will examine *him* you'll find that he's got one ball through the bone of his right arm and another one through the bone of his left leg. Now you can carry him aboard the train."

Shoving the Colt back again into its holster, Cal turned about and called to the engineer:

"Bill, that there rock-lookin' thing ahead uh your engine is only a hunk uh wood. You and your fireman can easily lift it off the track. You can go now, as soon as you like. I ain't touched your express-car—because I happen to know there ain't anything in it worth taking."

Then he again addressed the passengers, who were lined up where they had stood to witness the duel.

"I hope I ain't inconvenienced any of you gentlemen to-day," he said. "I haven't taken much. Only just enough to satisfy my men. But I have got a heap uh satisfaction out uh this little affair, if anybody should ask you about it. Al Pavey'll lose his arm, same's my friend's widow did hers, and mebbe he'll lose a leg, too. And, besides, I've saved my friend that you saw me send out uh the car. He's a little cracked in his belfry and they was takin' him to a 'sylum for criminal insane; but I didn't want him to go there—yet."

He waved one hand to indicate that the interview was finished; and then he stood there until every man was aboard the train, and it moved on along the curve of the horseshoe.

Then, when the rattle and roar of the train had died away in the distance, his men grouped themselves around him while the gigantic figure of the man he had taken from the train stepped forward and extended his hand.

"Cal," he said, "most uh the time I'm rational and all right, just as you see me now; but I have spells when I can't help what I do, and when I'm dangerous. You'd oughta left me on that train, with the irons on me."

"Not much, Tom; not much."

"Well, I'm glad you didn't. I'm mightily obliged to you for what you've done; and to all these friends uh your'n, too, some of whom I've knowed before and some of whom I ain't. But don't yeh forgit what I told yeh, will you?"

"About havin' spells?"

"Yes."

"Mebby they won't come back, Tom, now that you're free."

"Yes, they will. Mostly I know when they're comin' on, and when I do know it, I'll tell yeh, so's you can tie me up so's I won't hurt nobody. But look out for me if one takes me without any warning, cos I'm dangerous. I can't help myself, and I'm jest as liable to tackle you as anybody."

"I reckon we'll watch out for them spells uh your'n, Tom."

"I'd hate to hurt you, Cal," said the insane man, now so rational; and he said it pathetically.

"I'd sure hate to have you do it, Tom. We won't worry about it none."

"But you'll watch, won't yeh?"

"Yes."

"And make your men promise that they'll watch out, too."

"They hear you, Tom."

"I ain't myself when I have them spells. I ain't myself now, even. Not what I used to be. There's a terrible ding-dongin' in my head the hull time, as if that there train was runnin' through it pell-mell, and every horned creature from Texas to the Canada line was a-stampedin' through it all at once. You'll watch out, won't ye?"

"Sure. Don't you worry none, Tom."

"And don't let me have any weapons. It ain't safe."

"Just as you say, old-timer."

"And don't mention no names to me of folks we ever knowed. There are some uh them names that makes me see red. It ain't safe."

"All right."

"And, say, Cal?"

"Well?"

"If I get real bad—so's you can't do nothin' with me, you know—jest shoot me, will yeh? It'll be the easiest way, and I'd be obliged to yeh."

"We'll see about that, Tom, when the time comes," replied Barclay, with a smile.*

CHAPTER III.

NICK CARTER AFTER THE TRAIN-ROBBERS.

"Good morning, Mr. Carter."

"Good morning, Mr. Prentiss," replied the detective, who had just entered the office of the president of the S. M. & U. R. R.

"I am very glad indeed that you could make it convenient to reply to my communication in person," continued the president of the railroad—that same railroad upon which the train-robbery described in the preceding chapters had occurred seven months before; for the time was now the first week of May, and the hold-up had taken place early in October, as we know.

"It so happened that I could do so," responded the detective. "I gathered from what you said in your letter that you would like to have me here as soon as possible, and so here I am."

"Ready to take the case?"

"I know no reason why not, sir."

"Good! Excellent! I was afraid that your multitudinous affairs might prevent your handling it in person."

"No. I found out that I could do so. But my assistants had to be in other directions. I was not able to bring either of them with me."

The president smiled.

"I have here two men who say that they are old friends of yours," he announced. "I believe they are both anxious to assist in anything you undertake."

"Indeed? Who are they, Mr. Prentiss?"

"They are Richard Hartly and Conwell Myer."

"What! Dick and Con? That is fine. I shall be glad to see them; and more than glad to have them for assistants. But how does it happen that they are here?"

"Well, I bought a ranch—from another friend of yours, by the way; from Paul Brennan—and these men were employed there. I retained them."

"But I understood you to say that they were here in the city."

"So they are. When I told them that I was going to send East for you they begged so hard to be allowed to meet you here that I hadn't the heart to refuse them."

"I'm glad you hadn't. But you say you bought Paul Brennan's ranch?"

"Yes."

"Where is Paul?"

"Gone East—to Washington, I believe—to educate his boy."

"Well, hadn't we better get down to business? You sent for me on account of the hold-up along your line, I believe."

"Yes; and, Mr. Carter, there is another old acquaintance of yours concerned in that, too."

"You don't say! I seem to have them all around me."

"I refer this time to Cal Barclay."

"Oh; Cal, eh? Well, it is only fair to tell you that I already knew that much. I have read the papers."

"Of course. Cal is getting too busy to please us. He is altogether too industrious."

The detective smiled.

"You see," the president continued, "he works so differently from any of the others that we are never able to nail him, or to guess where he will appear next. He has skipped from one railroad to another, here in the Northwest, until we have got our heads together, and I have been selected to conduct negotiations with you with a view of breaking up the gang entirely."

"I think I understand."

"No, you don't understand quite yet. It isn't for one particular robbery that we want Cal; we want him for all of them."

Nick nodded.

"And we want him."

"Certainly."

"And all of his men."

"You mean that you want the gang so thoroughly broken up that it will never get together again."

"Mr. Carter, I and my associates are perfectly agreed in this matter. We want that gang extermi-

*See No. 614, NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

nated. We want every man connected with it accounted for. We want to know that every one of them is either in prison or dead, or out of the country. We want you to accomplish this for us whether it takes a month or ten years. We will not count the cost. You may go as far as you like in that respect."

"All right. It is the sort of a job I like."

"There is no need of my telling you about any particular robbery."

"No."

"In fact, you have read the papers, and, therefore, you already know as much about them as I do; perhaps more."

"Very likely."

"There isn't anything I could tell you. All we know is that Cal Barclay is the chief of the outfit. They have got three or four hiding-places among the mountains, but we haven't the least idea where they are located."

"How many men has Cal got in his entire gang?"

"We don't know that, either. Sometimes only four or five have appeared; and again, on one or two occasions as many as a dozen have showed up. Once there were two hold-ups so far apart and so nearly at the same time that it could not have been the same party that did both. There were fully twenty men concerned in both affairs."

"You think they were both members of Cal's outfit?"

"We don't think there is any doubt of that."

"Still, there might have been two entirely separate gangs."

"There might have been; but I don't think so. And, by the way, Carter, there is another thing."

"What is it?"

"There is another man here in this town who would like to join forces with you."

"Another man? Who is he?"

"He used to be sheriff in one of the northern counties of the State. He was in that hold-up that occurred last October. Barclay compelled the man to fight a sort of duel with him, and shot off an arm and a leg, but——"

"Oh! you mean the man who is called Al Pavey?"

"Yes. You have heard of him?"

"I read about the affair in the papers."

"Cal made him fight a pistol-duel, and the sheriff had his right arm and left leg shot up so badly that both had to be amputated. And now, although Pavey hobbles about on crutches when he isn't in the saddle, and has only one arm to fight with, he swears that he'll get Cal Barclay before he dies."

"There was some justice in what Barclay did at the time, wasn't there?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"I remember reading about it. Cal offered the man a fair fight, as I remember it."

"Well, you can talk all that over with Pavey. He is here, waiting for you."

"What! Here in this building?"

"Yes."

"I am sorry that you brought him here, Mr. Prentiss, because if the story I read about the affair was a true one, I don't want anything to do with the man."

"No? Not when he says he can help you?"

"I don't think that sort of help I'd be willing to accept. The account I read about him said that he shot a woman so that she had to have her arm taken off; and that on the day when Cal shot him, he, the ex-sheriff, didn't play fair."

"All the same, I wish you'd see him. He's a sort of employee of ours."

"An employee? How is that?"

"He is at the head of our detective force for the railroad. He has been very——"

"Mr. Prentiss, you will pardon me if I interrupt you right there, won't you?"

"Certainly; what is it?"

"When you sent for me to place this case into my hands, you had decided to put it absolutely in my control, had you not?"

"Of course."

"I am not to be interfered with by any local officers, or by any man whatever or whoever, am I?"

"No, sir."

"Very well. With that understanding I will go ahead; but I wouldn't touch the case otherwise."

"That will be all right, Mr. Carter. But I would like you to see and talk with Pavey, if you don't mind."

"Very well. Will you send for him?"

"Yes; and I will leave you alone together, if you'll excuse me. I have an engagement, and you will not need me. I will leave instructions with the treasurer of the road to honor your demands for funds. Don't forget you have a free hand in this matter."

"I won't."

"Then I will leave you now. You don't need me any more?"

"No."

"If you will wait where you are I will send Pavey to you at once."

"Very well. Did you say that he is the chief of your detectives on the road?"

"Yes."

"How long has he held that position?"

"Only a little over a month. He hasn't been able to be about till lately."

"One more question. How came you to give the position to him?"

"Why, we needed such a man, and he applied for the place. He was well recommended, and we thought him about the man we wanted."

"Thank you. How many men has he under him?"

"Not many as yet. He is really organizing the force to suit himself."

"I see. Very well, if you send him to me I will talk with him."

When the detective was alone he had a little time to think before the expected man came into the room.

Nick had read a graphic account of the hold-up affair in which Pavey had been shot, and from the mere reading of that article he felt an unaccountable repulsion for the man. It may have been because he had known Cal Barclay a little on one occasion,* but he figured that it was more because the then sheriff had acted the part of a coward in turning and firing at the train-robber before the agreed-upon word was given.

Anyhow, the detective was firmly decided in his mind on one point, and that was that he did not desire, and would not accept, the assistance of the ex-sheriff in running down the train-robbers.

He was glad to have the assistance of two such men as Dick Hartly and Con Meyer, for he had tried them on two occasions and knew them to be men of worth.†

Then the office door opened and Al Pavey, ex-sheriff, entered the room on crutches, and stopped just inside the door.

"I suppose you are the detective, Nick Carter, aren't you?" he asked; "well, I am Albert Pavey, chief of detectives of the railroad, and I reckon that we can work this case out together to beat the band."

"Do you?" replied Nick, and he smiled.

*See No. 614, NICK CARTER WEEKLY.
†See Nos. 613 and 614, NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WORST KIND OF A CRIPPLE.

"Maybe you don't suppose from my appearance that I will be much good in a chase like the one you've got ahead of you, Carter," continued Pavey, dropping upon a chair, "but I tell you right now that I've got reason behind it all that is enough to drive me ahead if I did not have a leg to stand on."

"Indeed?" said the detective.

"That's what! It was Cal Barclay who shot this leg and this arm off. Maybe you read something about it."

"I think I did see an account of it."

"Probably the one you saw was a lie, same as the most of them."

"Would you like to tell me about it, Mr. Pavey?"

"Betcher life I would, Carter."

"Very well; do so."

"Well, it was this way: I was taking a lunatic named Morgan to the asylum for the criminal insane when that train was held up last October. Barclay stopped the train to get the crazy cuss off'n it, and found me there. There was an old grudge between us——"

"What about?"

"I'll come to that in a minute. It wasn't much. I might as well tell it now."

"Yes."

"Well, once when I was trying to arrest Barclay, a young woman that lived in the house with her invalid mother—she got in the way and she was shot accidentally by my gun. I didn't mean to hit her, you know; but she lost an arm, same as I have, because the bone was shattered."

"Perhaps that is why Barclay shot your arm off."

"It is. He's a dead shot. Can drive nails as far as he can see their heads. But, anyhow, as soon as he discovered me on the train that day, he made out that he was going to kill me then and there. I asked for a chance of even play, and the passengers stood for me, and so he was compelled to agree to a duel. Well, we went outside the car and stood back to back; but when the man was counting time for us, Barclay wheeled and fired before it was time. The first bullet took me in the leg and the next one——"

"That isn't the way the account read, Mr. Pavey."

"No? Mebby you saw one of them that said I shot first, and before the time."

"I did."

"It was a lie. It was Barclay. And then——"

"At all events, Mr. Pavey, I am not interested. The one thing important is that I do not think I need your assistance in this affair I have on hand."

"What? Not need me?"

"No. I won't need you."

"But you've got to take me on."

"Have I? Why so?"

"Because I'm chief of detectives for this road. You see, I am really above you in authority; but I'm willing to waive that in case——"

"I shall not require your services, Pavey."

"Now, look here, Carter. It's this way: I'm the chief——"

"You have said that three times now. I quite understand it. I am sorry to refer to your infirmities, but I couldn't use a cripple in this affair."

"But I ain't no cripple. I've lost an arm and a leg, but——"

"You have lost something else that is very much more serious, Pavey; something that renders you just the sort of cripple that I could not use. I could stand the absence of the arm and leg very well, but the other thing you have lost I couldn't do without."

"What's that? What the devil do you mean, anyhow?"

"It appears to me that you have lost all sense of honor and truth, Pavey. In a word, you are a liar, and I couldn't take a liar with me."

The words were uttered very coolly; so coolly, indeed, that the ex-sheriff merely sat there and gasped, not knowing what to say; but suddenly he half-bounded to his one foot, seizing his crutch as he did so.

"Do you call me a liar?" he yelled.

"No; I have merely told you that you are one. That is not calling you one."

"By ginger, sir, I'll report you to Prentiss! I'll——"

The door opened and Mr. Prentiss entered the office.

"What is that you wish to report to me, Mr. Pavey?" he asked mildly, not sensing the real attitude of the man.

"This fellow here, sir," sputtered Pavey; "this man Carter, he's no good. I'd be glad if you would send him back East where he came from. He ain't got any call to come out here and try to run things. We don't need any tenderfoots of his stamp here, we don't!"

"Softly, softly. What is it all about, Mr. Carter?"

"Mr. Pavey feels resentful because I don't wish his assistance; that is about all," replied the detective.

"It ain't all, either. Carter called me a liar, and I won't stand for it."

"Aren't you one?" asked Nick, still smiling.

But the president of the road did not permit him to answer the question.

"We will excuse you for the present, Mr. Pavey," he said. "Mr. Carter shall take whoever he pleases on this case. You may return to your duties. Not a word, sir, if you please; and if it should happen that Mr. Carter *should* desire any assistance from you or any of your men at any time you will consider yourself as much under his authority as under mine."

After the ex-sheriff was gone, Prentiss turned to Nick and asked:

"What was the trouble, Mr. Carter?"

"It is merely that I am convinced of his incapacity, Mr. Prentiss. I could not make use of that kind of a cripple."

"Oh, well, if you don't need him that is all there is to be said about it. By the way, the two men I spoke about are outside. Do you care to see them?"

"Do you mean Dick and Con?"

"Yes."

"By all means. Have them in at once."

The president touched a bell and a moment later the two cow-punchers whom we have seen before, and whose worth we know, entered the room.*

Neither of the men uttered a word at first, but both strode forward and while Dick seized upon one of the detective's hands, Con grasped the other one, and they wrung them so energetically that even the detective winced under the pressure. Then Dick Hartly found his tongue.

"Nick, you Eastern-bred, stall-fed, manicured and tailored tenderfoot, how be yeh? Glory be, but I'm right smart glad to see yeh!" and Con followed with:

"Nick Carter, yeh onery cuss, how be yeh?"

The detective laughed heartily.

"Boys," he replied, "a welcome like this is worth going three thousand miles to get; and I am just as glad to see you both as you are to see me. I am very much pleased to find you both here, too."

"You're going to take us with you, ain't you, Nick?" asked Hartly.

"You bet I am, Dick."

"Whoop-eeee!" yelled Meyer; and he threw his hat into the far corner of the room in the exuberance of his joy; then he turned a sheepish face toward the

*See Nos. 613 and 614 of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

president, who was regarding the scene with amusement, and added: "I beg yeh'r parding, Mr. Prentiss, but——"

"It's all right, Con." Then to Nick, the president added: "These men aren't cripples, evidently."

"No," replied Nick; "and if both of them had lost both arms and legs they wouldn't be as greatly crippled as Pavey."

"What's that? Pavey?" demanded Hartly. "What about Pavey?"

"Oh, he was here a minute ago and wanted me to take him on the case," replied the detective.

"Yeh didn't do it, did yeh?"

"No."

"That feller ain't no account in life, Nick. He's a hawss-thief and a liar, that's what he is. I hope I won't meet up with him while I'm in town—because he's a cripple; but I do reckon even at that it would be hard to keep my hands off'n him."

"What is the trouble with Pavey?" asked the president.

"Oh, nothin', sir. I don't want to knock him. I hear he's workin' for you, and if he is, an' yeh're satisfied, I reckon it ain't none uh my funeral. But you jest keep him an' me separated particular."

"If you or Mr. Carter think there are reasons why he should not be retained in the position he occupies, you have only to tell me about it," said Prentiss; and Nick replied hastily:

"As long as he gives satisfaction in his present position, Mr. Prentiss, far be it from me or either of my friends here to say a word against him. Isn't that right, boys?"

"You bet, Nick. Everything you say goes!"

"It is a matter of personal dislike, Mr. Prentiss, and we could not work well if we had a man with us whom we did not like."

"No, of course not. You are evidently satisfied with these two, Mr. Carter?"

"I am, indeed. We have been out on the trail before now. Twice; eh, boys?"

"You bet, Nick."

"I think Paul Brennan told me something about it when I bought his place."

"And say, Nick," Hartly broke in, "when Mr. Prentiss bought the ranch he bought us along with it. We was the appurtenances, as they called 'em. He couldn't have had the ranch without us."

"I begin to think I could not run it without you," said Prentiss, laughing. "What worries me now is how things will go while you are absent with Carter, hunting train-robbers. I'm afraid the place will go to the dogs."

"Nonsense, sir. It'll run itself. Say, Nick."

"Well?"

"I suppose you're foreseein' the event of our meetin' up with Tom Morgan again, ain't yeh, old hawss?"

"Yes. I have heard that he is with Barclay, somewhere in the mountains. But he hasn't been active in the train-robberies, has he?"

"No; I reckon not. I have heard a good deal about him, and they do say he is mighty bad."

"How so?"

"Crazy as a bug. Locoed as a Mexican bull calf that lost its mama. I have heard rumors about him to the effect that they have to keep him tied up most uh the time, for fear he'll shoot up the camp, up there among the outlaws. He must be a nice, comfortable, amusin' gazabo to have around, don't yeh think so?"

"Yes. I should think it would be uncomfortable."

"But I call it mighty decent uh Cal Barclay tuh take such good care uh the crazy cuss, just because they used tuh be old pals. It's too bad, Nick, that Cal's a train-robber; otherwise he'd be a mighty fine feller. But he sure is bad medicine as it is."

"Yes; he's a bad man. There are a good many things against him."

"He has said, yeh know, that he'll never be taken alive."

"I have heard that, too."

"You can bank on it that he means it. When we meet up with him, there'll be something doing around the old home, and don't yeh forgit it."

CHAPTER V.

A MILLION-DOLLAR HOLD-UP.

It was late in the afternoon when the interviews just described took place in the office of the president of the railroad, and it was finally agreed between the three friends that they would meet there again the following morning at ten, to make the final arrangements for the chase after the train-robbers.

"In the meantime," Nick told his two friends, "I will have laid out some sort of a plan of campaign. I have picked up considerable information about the men we want, and to-night I will think it all over very carefully, so that in the morning I may be prepared to talk to the point."

But when they did meet the following morning,

something had occurred which effectually altered any plans which the detective had made.

Another train-robbery had occurred that morning; and, strangely enough, it had happened at the very same place where the other one that has already been described in the earlier chapters of this story took place.

It was the only time on record when Cal Barclay had used the same scene twice for his robberies.

But it was evident that he had good reasons for making this an exception. A very large amount of cash had been taken by the robbers.

The express-car was conveying a safe that was literally packed with money, so the report stated, and in some unknown manner the robbers had been made acquainted with the fact.

It was the same train that had been robbed on that other occasion when the express-car was not molested; when the real incentive for the robbery had been the rescue of Tom Morgan, and when it had ended in the duel between Cal Barclay and the then sheriff.

But this time the robbers paid no attention to the passenger coaches; they had gone directly to the express-car. They had ordered the messenger to come out of it or be blown up with dynamite, and he had obeyed. Then the safe containing the money had been dumped on the ground and blown open.

That was the story in a nutshell; save only for the amazing fact that the robbers had really gotten away with almost half a million dollars, partly in gold, partly in currency.

The express company would not reveal the exact amount, but to Nick Carter, through the president of the railroad, it was told privately that the amount of cash secured amounted to almost a million.

It seems incredible that so much money would be shipped in such a manner, and that at a time when the Western country was infested by train-robbers; but it appeared that it was a special case where the shippers were so anxious to get the cash through to its destination that they had actually assumed half of the risk.

Then the robbery followed.

It was a mystery, of course, how the robbers could have been informed of the shipment of the money, and found time to lay their plans; but there was no way of finding that out, at least not at present. The information of the robbery had only just reached Mr. Prentiss when Nick Carter arrived at the office.

"Cal Barclay has been busy again," was the announcement of the president, when the detective appeared; and then he went on to relate what has already been outlined.

"There has been a leak of information somewhere," said Nick. "Where was the money shipped from?"

"Seattle."

"The express company detectives will work up that end of it all right, so there won't be any occasion for me to bother about that," said Nick. "All the same, Mr. Prentiss, I wish you would keep yourself informed, and tell me all the information that comes to you."

"I will surely do that, Carter."

"My duty is not to run down this particular robbery, but to capture the robbers and break up the gang irrespective of it, as I understand the situation."

"Exactly."

"Then to me this additional robbery is only an incident. But I do think this about it, Mr. Prentiss."

"What about it?"

"First—before I reply to that question—tell me exactly how much money was taken."

"Eight hundred thousand dollars, Nick. Of course, it is a secret. You understand that?"

"Yes."

"The express company stands only half of the loss, according to arrangement."

"That fact does not interest me. What does interest me—and the thing to which I referred a moment ago—is the fact that Cal Barclay is now so well heeled."

"I don't think I understand what you mean by that, Carter."

"Well, I mean this: Cal's share of this particular robbery will be so much that, by putting it with his other profits, he must have almost a million dollars stored away for his own use. Don't you think so?"

"I don't know. Possibly so."

"Well, it used to be said of Barclay that he had fixed a million as his 'pile.' I have heard it said about him on good authority, that when he had a million he was going to quit. Now, it occurs to me that perhaps the time has come for him to do that."

"Do you mean——"

"Please wait till I tell you what I mean."

"Very well."

"Cal is reported to have said on several occasions that he would quit with a million, and live like a gentleman; that he would settle down in some city, where he used to live, and that he would spend his money like a lord without anybody suspecting his past. Have you ever heard that?"

"No."

"Well, from what I have seen of Cal Barclay I shouldn't wonder if it is true."

"Do you mean that you intend to abandon the case?"

"Certainly not. What I do mean is that I begin to think, since this last robbery, that the mountains is not the place to look for him."

"Oh."

"What I do think about it is that he will leave his men to their own devices. If he does that, the rest of them will be easy marks. I think that even your man Pavey might break up what would remain of the gang."

"You think it is due to Cal that they have been so successful?"

"Entirely. He is a man of brains. He is an educated man. He can use as imperfect English as anybody, but he can also use the best if he cares to do so."

"You think that he was a gentleman before he became a robber, then?"

"I know that he has the appearance and the manners of one, to say the least."

"Well?"

"Mr. Prentiss, how long would it take a special engine, drawing one car, to get me to the Toe Cork Mountain? That is where the robbery occurred, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"How quick could you get me there?"

"By three or four o'clock this afternoon."

"Will you make arrangements to have that done?"

"Yes."

"How soon may I be ready to start?"

"In fifteen minutes. Whom do you want to take with you?"

"Dick and Con. No others."

"I'll send you up there in my private car. It is here and nobody wants to use it. Shall you return with the car?"

"I can't tell about that till I get on the ground; but probably not."

Dick Hartly and Con Meyer came into the office at that moment, and they followed Nick to the train-sheds where they were to take the special. On the way Nick asked Hartly:

"Do you know anything about the country, up around Toe Cork Mountain, Dick?"

"No; but Con does," was the reply.

"What do you know about it, Con?"

"I know every inch of it for a long ways around there, Nick."

"Well, while we are slipping over the rails, you think over all you do know about it. Refresh your memory as much as you can about it, because when we arrive I think I want to find somebody who lives somewheres around there, who might have heard some gossip about the outlaws. I suppose there is gossip about them, eh?"

"Plenty of it."

"What I want particularly to find out is, if Cal has been talking lately about quitting the business."

"You don't think that he would do that, do you?"

"Yes, I do." And Nick explained why.

During the fast ride that followed the three men were busy with their own thoughts, and there was not much conversation between them until the special stopped at last at the great bend of the horseshoe—at the base of Toe Cork Mountain, and just where the cañon, already described, looks as if it had been sliced out with a huge knife.

There were evidences enough around the place of the presence of the robbers there.

A little way up the cañon they found where the horses had been tied and left until the outlaws should need them again; and there were many other evidences of the sort.

A posse had already been formed and had gone in pursuit of the outlaws, sent out by the authorities of the county, and led by the sheriff; but posses like that never do anything but take a long ride and return, swearing if it had not been for so and so, or such and such a thing, they would have come up with the robbers and captured them.

It is always the old story.

Nick Carter did not mean to pursue the men by any such methods.

It was his idea to work slowly and very surely. Time was no object with him, in the way he had taken the case; results were.

By an additional arrangement made by the detective immediately after his talk with the president of the road, the special engine had drawn two cars behind it, instead of one; and the second car was a box affair which held three horses with their accouterments.

The result was that when the detective and his friends left the special at Toe Cork Mountain, they were not afoot.

They led their horses into the cañon and tied them where the outlaws had secured theirs during the hold-up, while Nick looked the ground over; but it was less than half an hour later when they mounted and

started up the cañon in pursuit of the robbers, knowing, however, that the posse of the sheriff of the county was somewhere between them and their prey.

But it was the men of that posse whom Nick wished particularly to see and interview, if he was fortunate enough to meet them on their return.

They were obliged to camp that night, for they had not yet come out of the cañon; but about ten o'clock the following morning they issued from it upon a fairly level place where the going was not bad. By noon that same day they met the greater part of the posse returning, although some of the members of it had gone off to their homes by other routes.

The sheriff was a young man scarcely past his majority—indeed, he told Nick that he was only twenty-four; but he had a fine face and a resolute air which Nick liked and admired at once. His name was James Leonard, and we believe he is now famous, in his way.

"I'd like to have a talk with you, Mr. Leonard," Nick told him, "if you don't mind stopping here a little while."

"I'm yours to command, Mr. Carter," was the instant reply, for Nick had already informed the young sheriff who he was and why he was there.

CHAPTER VI.

NICK CARTER FINDS A CLUE.

They withdrew a little to one side from the other members of the party while Dick and Con busied themselves in getting acquainted with the men who had accompanied the sheriff. Nick had already told his two friends what sort of questions he wished them to ask, and they were hot on the trail to begin what they called real detective work.

In as few words as possible, Nick told the young sheriff what his own idea was about the future conduct of Cal Barclay.

"You see," he explained, "as nearly as I can figure it out, Cal must have about all of that million laid away by this time. If he *has* got it, he is ready to quit. And if he is ready to quit, nothing earthly can hold him here among these mountains."

"Do you really think that, Mr. Carter?"

"I really do. But you ask the question, and your manner is such that I am led to believe that you have heard something of the sort before now."

"I have."

"Good. That is exactly what I want you to tell me about."

"I shall be very glad to tell you all I know."

"Thank you."

"I have only been sheriff of my county since last fall. I have been active in the chase of Barclay ever since."

"I could not doubt that. I think if he stayed here long enough, and you remained sheriff, you would catch him, too."

"I don't know about that. You see, this is just the point. He has got me on honor, in a way."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, the last time I went out after him, instead of catching him, he caught me."

"Eh? Is that so?"

"Yes. We were hot on the trail, but my men got tired of it. They wanted to go back, for they had made up their minds that we could not come up with the outlaws. But the trail was so fresh that I didn't like to give up. The result of it all was that I permitted all but three of them to take the back trail, while with the remaining three I kept on."

"I see. And Barclay laid for you, eh?"

"Just that. We were camped in the mountains twenty miles back from here and were just taking our coffee in the morning when it was a case of "Hands up!" and Barclay with a dozen men rode out upon us. There wasn't the slightest show for us to do a thing; and we didn't try."

"A good thing for you that you didn't."

"Of course."

"What happened?"

"Well, Barclay was there in person. Have you ever seen him?"

"Yes."

"Then you know what a handsome chap he is, and how like a college professor he can talk if he wants to. Well, he called me to one side after he had made us lay aside our weapons; and he talked with me quite a while. Shall I tell you what he said?"

"I wish you would."

"He looked me over as if I were a young colt, or a prize steer; and then he said: 'I rather like your looks, young fellow. You're too young to be a sheriff. By rights, I ought to shoot you to get rid of you, but I don't want to do that.'

"I told him I hoped he wouldn't change his mind, and he said:

"'I'm going to let you go. I'm going to spare your life, and I'm not going to ask any promises of you,

but I'm going to tell you this: If you come out after me again, you won't shoot at me because of my promise which I make to you now, not to shoot at you; and to order my men not to kill you, either. You can take after me all you please, but you will only direct affairs, for you will not do any shooting. Do you know why?'

"'I don't know anything of the kind,' I told him; and he laughed and said:

"'Oh, yes, you do. My men shall have orders from this minute not to hurt you, and you are much too square a chap to shoot down any of my men when you know that they can't retaliate; for when I give them an order they have to obey it.' I have told you this, Mr. Carter, to let you understand what I meant when I said that he had put me on my honor."

"I understand. He had no right to do that."

"But he did do it."

"Perhaps so. I suppose he had some other reason that he did not tell you."

"I have thought of that. It is likely, although I cannot imagine one."

"Well, what else occurred?"

"I am coming to that. Barclay made this remark to me:

"'I have almost made my pile. One or two more good hauls and I'm out of the game.'

"'You'll never give it up,' I told him.

"'Oh, yes, I will,' he said. 'I wasn't always an outlaw, and I don't propose always to remain one. When I have my pile laid away I'm going to settle down and live respectably, and I am going into society.' And after a pause, he added: 'Sheriff, I want you to be particularly careful with my poor men when I have left them. There ain't a man among them who is fit to lead. I shall advise them to quit, too; but they won't do it. They have found things so dead easy under my leadership that they think they can keep on doing the same sort of thing, but they won't last long after I have gone and left them.'"

"He knew what he was talking about," said the detective.

"Yes. I think he did; and after what you said just now, it all came back to me."

"It would seem that he certainly got enough out of this last robbery to finish out that 'pile' he was talking about."

"I should think so. I suppose he got more than has been told."

"Yes; I think so. I would like to ask you a few personal questions, Mr. Leonard, if you don't mind."

"Not at all."

"Did you not regard Barclay's conduct, as well as the words he said to you, as rather unusual?"

"I did; most certainly."

"How do you account for it?"

"I don't pretend to account for the incident at all."

"What was his manner when he said that he should order his men not to hurt you? Was it just quizzical?"

"No. That was a funny thing about it. If it had been that, I should have taken no notice of it; but the fact is, that his manner was that of a person who has taken a sudden interest in me. I could not understand it at all."

"Do you think he looked at you as if he knew you? As if *he had known* you before, or had known somebody whom you happened to resemble?"

"That is it, Mr. Carter. That is just what I thought."

"What is?"

"That I resembled some one whom he had once known."

"He didn't say so, did he?"

"No; but he kept looking at me as if it were so; and I caught him doing it several times, when I am sure he did not intend I should see him."

"You are not a Western lad, are you?"

"Oh, yes. That is, I was born in Kansas City and, save when I was away at school, lived there till I was eighteen; but I have been out in this country since then."

"How did that happen?"

"I had an uncle out here who asked me to come to him. He died two years ago, and now I own the ranch that was his."

"I see. But formerly you lived in Kansas City, did you?"

"Yes."

"Have you sisters and brothers, Mr. Leonard? Excuse me, but I was wondering if in the past life of Barclay he might not have met and known a brother or sister of yours, whom you happen to resemble."

"I have a sister. She is several years older than I. It has been said that we look alike."

"But there was nothing about Barclay to suggest to you that you had ever seen him before, was there?"

"Again, Mr. Carter, I must admit that there was a something of the sort. I could not describe it, and I have told myself over and over again that I am mistaken. But always the idea will return."

"Then you may depend upon it that you *have* seen

the man before; doubtless when you were a mere boy. Have you been able to place him at all, even to the extent of mere supposition?"

"No."

"Is your sister still living in Kansas City?"

"Yes."

"She is married by this time, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Pardon me if I seem persistent, but have you ever written to her about your encounter with Barclay?"

"Yes. I did so. I told her of the impression the man made upon me. Told her all about the interview, in fact."

"Indeed. What did she have to say in return?"

"She forgot to mention the subject at all when she wrote in reply."

"I see. It did not evidently interest her sufficiently so that she remembered it when she wrote to you afterward."

"That was what I thought. You see, while she usually replies to my letters at once, that time she did not answer for a considerable time, so I suppose the subject escaped her memory. Indeed, she remarked that she had mislaid my letter."

"I see. I see. Did you refer to the subject again, in writing to her?"

"No."

"By the way, would you mind telling me your sister's married name, Mr. Leonard?"

"Really, Mr. Carter, I——"

"Pardon me a moment. It is this way. I think Barclay is a man who has been known to the people of Kansas City. Since what you have told me I have an idea that he will go there, if not to remain, at least to view the old scenes with which he was once familiar. I think it likely that your sister may have known him when he was all right. Now, it is possible that I may have to search for the man in one or more of the cities of the Middle West. I am a fair cartoonist, and, if necessary, I could make a fairly good drawing of Barclay, as he looked when I saw him."

"You have seen him, then?"

"Once; yes. Now, if I knew your sister, and if you would permit me to tell her that I have met you, I could call upon her and ask her if she could identify the face I would draw for her. There could be no objection to that, could there?"

"N-no; I don't think so."

"Then will you tell me her name?"

"She is now Mrs. Harry Pemberton. Her given name is Clara."

"Thank you, Mr. Leonard."

CHAPTER VII.

THE WAY OF THE TRAIL.

Nick Carter and his two friends rode onward presently after having sat upon their horses watching the sheriff and his posse disappear in the direction of the cañon.

"Dick," said the detective, "if I followed out my inclinations at the present moment and acted upon an intuitive feeling that I have about the truth of this matter, I would about-face right here, and start on the return track at once."

Hartly and Meyer both pulled up their horses with simultaneous jerks, and it was Meyer who exclaimed:

"You don't mean to say that you're thinking of giving up the trail after Barclay, do you?"

"No," replied Nick, laughing, "I entertained no such thought as that."

"Then what do you mean?" asked Hartly.

"I meant, Dick, that I have heard enough already, since we have been in these mountains, to convince me that Cal Barclay will not remain among them an hour longer than is necessary. He will dig up his treasure, wherever it is, and skip out of this neighborhood about as fast as he is able to travel."

"What makes you so cock-sure of that, I'd like to know?" asked Hartly.

"Where do you think he's gone to?" asked Meyer; and the two men spoke almost in the same breath.

"I have already told you why I am so sure about that thing," explained the detective. "And I don't know that I can make you understand exactly why I have an idea as to where he will go when he does leave here. But I *have* such an idea, and I am so convinced of it that were it not for the fact that I never act on an impulse in these matters, I should turn about now and take the first train I could get for Kansas City."

"Kansas City!" exclaimed Hartly. "Aw, come, now, Nick, what has Kansas City got to do with Cal Barclay?"

"I am beginning to think it has a good deal to do with him."

"How so?"

"Well, it is partly intuition, I suppose."

"Intuition is a woman's game, Nick."

"It's a man's game, too, Dick—sometimes."

"What makes you think he's gone to Kansas City?"

"Never mind what makes me think he has gone to Kansas City. Now tell me what gossip you picked up while you were talking with the men of the posse."

"Oh, we didn't get much," replied Meyer.

And, indeed, they had not received any further information. It was only the idea that Nick had picked up during his conversation with Sheriff Leonard which convinced the detective that it was practically useless to hunt for Cal Barclay among those mountains.

Nick was thoroughly convinced in his own mind that the outlaw, as soon as he could reach the spot where his money was concealed, would lose no time in getting out of that part of the country and seeking other scenes and pastures new, where he would not be known, where there would be little or no danger that he might be suspected, and where he could carry out the plan he had so often threatened, of returning to the world he had given up when he became a thief and an outlaw.

And if we stop to analyze the conversation that the detective had with the young sheriff, we will discover that Nick Carter did not have more than mere intuition to go upon.

It is true it had been an odd and unnatural thing for Barclay to do, to have conversed with the young sheriff as he had done upon the occasion of their encounter, and Nick believed he had read in that incident, or, rather, in the relation of it, one of the secrets of Cal Barclay's life.

The rest of the recital of the young sheriff bore him out in this idea, and there was really no doubt in Nick Carter's mind that Cal Barclay had recognized in young Leonard, when he encountered him, the brother of a woman he had once loved.

Surely there was a romance in it somewhere, and the conduct of Barclay on that occasion already described, when, instead of taking Leonard's life or even threatening to do so, he had spared it and sworn to continue to spare it, and that he would also command his men not to molest him, had proclaimed as loudly as though he had spoken it in words, the fact that he had an interest in the young man which did not appear on the surface.

Our three friends rode on together in silence for a long time after this last exchange of confidences, for each one was busied with his own thoughts.

As the hour came near to sundown Nick turned to Meyer and asked him if there was any ranch-house or habitation of any sort near-by where they could put up for the night, or if they would be compelled to again camp out.

"I reckon it'll be a case of camping out, Nick," Meyer replied to him. "If we could bore right through that mountain right there, on a bee-line, I reckon it ain't more'n four or five miles to one I know of; but according to the lay of this land we'd have to go about thirty-five to get to it, so I reckon we'd better camp."

Nick Carter was peculiarly wakeful during that night, for he could not get his mind from the idea that he should turn about at once and start for Kansas City, although when he stopped to consider the thing on anything like a logical basis, he knew that he had absolutely nothing to go by more than pure guesswork.

It was a maxim of his life's work never to permit himself to act upon impulse; and particularly in a case of this kind. In the present instance he determined that he would not permit himself to be led into the course he had an idea of pursuing unless he should be fortunate enough to discover other evidence to substantiate it.

It was noon of the following day when upon riding around a bend in the ravine they were following, they came suddenly upon two horsemen who were approaching them; and the two men halted their horses the instant they saw they were observed and sat quietly in their saddles after that, with their hands resting upon the butts of their guns, prepared for anything that might occur.

Whether or not these men were two of the members of the gang of outlaws, Nick Carter had no means of determining, although under the circumstances, and since the detective and his two friends did not once leave the outlaw's trail, he had no doubt in his own mind that they were so.

The two remained perfectly still while Nick and Con and Dick also pulled their horses to a stop; and so the two parties, numbering two and three respectively, sat facing each other for the space of a minute, and in utter silence.

"Hello, old-timer," Nick called out to them, then. "You're acting as though you didn't like our looks."

"We thought that was the way you were acting," replied one of the other two men.

"Well," laughed Nick, "as far as we're concerned, we're real friendly."

There was a general laugh at this, and the five men rode forward, meeting midway of the distance, and

then it was that Nick asked with some abruptness, but still with a suggestion of laughter in his voice:

"Have you fellows seen anything of a gang of outlaws that's trying to escape around here?"

The detective thought from the expression of the face of the man who sat nearest to him on his horse that had it not been for the fact that Dick and Con had each assumed positions which placed them in absolute readiness, the question might have been sharply received; as it was, however, the man addressed replied solemnly and slowly, but with unmistakable emphasis:

"No, we ain't seen none such."

"Well, we haven't, either," replied Nick, "but we have heard that there's a few up here under the leadership of a certain Cal Barclay, who made a big strike last night."

One of the men laughed outright at this, and he replied to Nick's remark by exclaiming:

"Stranger, if Cal Barclay has made a big strike in the money line, as you say, you can bank your pile on the idea that he won't remain long in these diggings."

"Why not?" asked the detective.

"Because, mister, it'll be his'n for the effete East as soon as he can make it."

"How do you know that?"

"I know it, mister, because I've heard him say it a good many times, if anybody should stand on his head and ask you."

"You must know the man," said Nick.

"I ain't saying whether I know him or not; and it ain't none of your business whether I do or not; ain't that right?"

"It sure is," admitted the detective.

"Well, you can take it from me, and you can put it down as good and plenty correct, that if Cal Barclay and his gang made a big strike last night there won't be no more workings in that mine-shaft for some time to come."

"Do you mean that he'll disband his men?" asked the detective.

"I ain't saying about that, because I don't know, but it's my idee that he'll disband himself mighty sudden."

Nick Carter managed to get into his face an expression which denoted almost as plainly as words could have done, that he regretted this fact; and so plainly did he portray the thought that the man who had been doing the most talking remarked with an interrogatory inflection to his voice:

"Maybe you three gazobos was looking for Cal and his outfit?"

"Maybe we are," admitted Nick.

"You ain't no sheriff's posse, are you?"

"No, siree."

"And you ain't any sort of a sheriff on your own hook, are you?"

"Not a little bit."

"Well, that being the case, there couldn't be but one reason for your wanting to meet up with Cal."

"I reckon you're a pretty good guesser," said Nick, with a slow smile into which he managed to induce an expression of craftiness.

The man who had been doing the talking shrugged his shoulders and turned toward his companion, to whom he made several remarks in a low and guttural tone uttered in a language which Nick Carter knew to be some Indian dialect, although he did not in the least understand it.

He was quite content that the two men should converse together for a few moments without his understanding what they might say, for he had made a shrewd guess to himself that these men were undoubtedly members of Barclay's gang of outlaws, and were even now returning after parting with the others since the last successful robbery.

Whatever it was that the two men had to say to each other in the Indian dialect, they seemed to have arrived at a definite conclusion concerning Nick and his two friends, for the man who had all along been spokesman now resumed the conversation by saying:

"There won't be any use for you, mister, to look for Cal Barclay himself. You can take that from me as being straight."

"Why not?"

"Because he has lit out."

"Lit out where?"

"History doesn't state."

"Do you mean that he's gone for good?"

"That's the general idea; yes."

"But he didn't take the whole outfit with him, did he?"

"No."

"Where is a man likely to run across some of the others?"

"That depends, mister, how anxious you are to find them, and what business you have with them when you do find them."

"I'm right anxious to find them, and I reckon when I do so, it'll be time enough to disclose my business."

"Well, mister, if you're right much in earnest about

it, you just ride straight ahead on the trail you're following now, and maybe if you keep at it long enough, you'll come up with some of 'em."

"I don't know as I would be plumb anxious to find them if I was dead sure that Cal Barclay had drifted," said Nick, with a pause that had just enough hesitation about it to make his hearers believe that he carefully considered what he said; and the reply he received to the remark was convincing.

"In that case, mister," said the man, "if you can get to your home any quicker by taking the back track, I'd suggest that you do it. Good day."

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO FUGITIVE OUTLAWS.

So convinced was the detective of the authenticity of this statement that before the two men had passed out of sight down the trail up which Nick Carter and his two companions had been advancing, he determined upon his course.

"Hartly," he said, "I'm convinced that we're wasting time following along this road. If I'm any judge of character at all, those two men who just passed us took part in the robbery that occurred last night."

"I'd stake my life on it," said Meyer.

"That one who did all the chinning knew what he was talking about, too, and I wouldn't be afraid to wager considerable that while they have been members of the train-robber gang, they have severed their connections with it to-day; and I believe also that if you could know positively their reasons for doing so, it would be discovered that they have quit because Cal Barclay did so."

"I'm agreein' with you, Nick," said Hartly.

"I'm sufficiently well convinced of it," the detective went on again presently, "that I'm going to leave this trail and take the back track."

"It can't do us no good to go where we came from," volunteered Con. "We couldn't get no train to stop at the Horseshoe curve where that special brought us."

"I guess you're right, Con. Where is the nearest railroad-station?"

"There's Boulder on the Northern Pacific."

"How far is that?"

"I reckon we could make it by eight or nine o'clock to-night."

"In that case, Con, you're guide. Lead the way. We'll make for Boulder if our horses can take us there."

They started back along the same trail they had been following, and pursued it for three or four miles when they branched off to the north through a coulée where the going was much better, and over which they could consequently make much faster time.

They had covered possibly fifteen miles since their new start, when, in crossing a long level space, they discovered two horsemen directly ahead of them, and had no difficulty in recognizing the two men with whom they had talked earlier in the day.

These men discovered them at about the same time, and for a moment it seemed to Nick as if they hesitated between three courses to pursue; that is, whether to fight, or to run away, or simply to await calmly the approach of the three men who now seemed to be pursuing them.

They chose the latter course, but it was quite evident to Nick, as he rode forward toward them, that they were prepared to fight if need be, and to fight to the death at that.

"Hello, old-timers!" he called out to them as he rode forward in advance of his two friends. "It looks to me just as if we'd met up with you again, although I hope you won't think we followed you with that intention, because we didn't."

"I guess we're willing to take your say-so about it," replied the one who had constituted himself spokesman.

"Then, if we're going in the same direction, maybe we can ride along together and keep company."

"There ain't no objection to that as far as we're concerned," was the reply. "Only I'd like to ask where you're bound."

"We're going to Boulder," said Nick.

"To Boulder? That's a railroad-station."

"Yes, that's why we're going there."

"Have you given up finding Cal Barclay's gang?"

"Yes; we took your say-so about it."

"I guess you done right about that, partner."

"Well, you see," continued the detective, with the manner of one who had suddenly decided to take these strangers into his confidence, "we was sort uh lookin' for Cal's gang because we had an idee that maybe some friends of ours was among them, but, seeing as how you was so plumb satisfied that Cal has drifted away from the bunch, and ain't chucking down his war-bag along with them no more, we just naturally right about faced, and now we're headed back where the houses grow, and where there ain't quite so many rocks as there are around here."

"We're going into Boulder," said the stranger, whom Nick had suspected of being an outlaw.

"Perhaps you're going to take the train for the East?" suggested the detective.

"Maybe we be. We ain't quite decided as to that."

"Sold your cattle off, and got some money to spend?"

"Yes, stranger, you struck it the first time. We've sold out our cattle, and ranch, and the hull shooting-match, and now we're going east to spend some of the dust."

The detective was now entirely convinced that these men had been concerned in the late hold-up, and he had no doubt whatever in his own mind that reposing in their pockets and money-belts at that very moment was their share of the plunder that had been thus obtained.

However, it was not safe to question them any more closely than he had already done. People who ask too many questions in the Western country are apt to get themselves disliked; but Nick Carter resolved, nevertheless, to cultivate these two men all he could, and he utilized every opportunity for getting deeper into their confidences. And he determined not to lose sight of them until he was positive as to who they were and where they were going.

The party thus augmented to five persons arrived at Boulder shortly after nine o'clock that evening, and as they rode into the little hamlet which was nothing more than a railway-station, with a store and a dwelling-house, and one or two shacks grouped around it, Nick remarked to the man who had all along been spokesman, and who had recently announced his name to be Sam Peck:

"Say, Sam, it don't look as if we'd find a considerable market for our horses here, does it?"

"Are you going to sell out?" asked Peck.

"That's what."

"Me and Joe were calculating on something of that kind, too."

"Well," said the detective, "suppose we bunch the cayuses together and then appoint a committee of one to negotiate the sale? When it's made, you and your partner take two-fifths of it, and we will assimilate the other three-fifths. How does that strike yeh?"

"All right," agreed Peck.

"Then I move," continued the detective, "that you, Sam, be appointed a committee of one to take charge of the outfit. You're to sell them for what you can get;" and there being no demurrer at this, it was agreed.

And so presently when they rode up to the station platform, it was not long before a dicker had been made with the man who had charge of the place with the result that he took possession of the horses with their saddles and bridles, giving in part payment therefor the transportation that was desired over the line of the railroad.

It was shortly after midnight that the east-bound train rolled into the station and stopped, and the five men boarded it together.

And so it happened that Nick Carter, notwithstanding his determination not to be governed by impulse, was nevertheless following out the idea that had been given him by the conversation he had with young Sheriff Leonard, and was already en route for Kansas City, where he believed he would quickly get upon the trail of Cal Barclay.

He found an opportunity before the train came in at the station to exchange a few words in low tones with Hartly, in which he instructed his friends to leave him as much alone as possible with Sam and Joe Peck, for it had developed that the two men they had encountered so strangely were brothers.

The train was a local, and there was, therefore, no sleeping-car attached to it; but if there had been it is doubtful if Nick Carter would have availed himself of it at that time.

The five men entered the smoking-car together, and were presently disposed in such a manner that Nick and Sam Peck occupied the same seat.

The detective, who was usually well provided with cigars, proffered one to the former outlaw, and then settled himself back comfortably to smoke, believing that it would be policy on his part henceforth to let his companions take the initiative in whatever conversation might follow.

There was, however, a long silence—so very long, indeed, that Nick began to fear that the man would not talk at all, when he suddenly broke it by inquiring:

"How far east are you going, Harper?" for Nick called himself Charlie Harper.

"Kansas City," was the prompt reply.

"Gee! That *is* east. That's almost the jumping-off place. I ain't never been no farther east than Denver in my life, and me and Joe figured on stopping there for a while, although we did have Salt Lake in mind; and Cheyenne, too. The fact is, we ain't determined where we do want to go."

The detective laughed, pretending to be much amused. Then he announced in reply:

"You're something in the same position as my two partners. They ain't made up their minds where they want to go, either, and they've been talking about one place and another, but I guess Denver would about suit them."

"Why don't you stop there, too?"

"No," shaking his head emphatically, "it's Kansas City for mine."

"Got friends there?"

"I used to have a few acquaintances there."

"I suppose you think that maybe you'd meet up with some of them if you go back there now?"

"Maybe so."

"Well, that's just the reason I've selected Denver. Two or three of our fellows are going to Denver, and Joe and me won't be alone there, nohow."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Nick, "if, perhaps, Dick and Con would get off there with you."

This conversation was only the preface to many that occurred during the somewhat tedious trip before Denver was reached, for it was a slow train they traveled upon, and they were two days and nights in making the distance.

But Nick Carter improved every opportunity that was afforded him during that time to make the most of his acquaintance with these two men, and the consequence was that by the time their train was rolling into the station at Denver, the five were on an extremely friendly footing with one another, and it had already been determined that Con and Dick were to leave the train there, in company with their new friends.

This was, of course, a part with Nick Carter's plans, for he realized only too well that his own expedition to Kansas City was likely to prove a wild-goose chase with nothing but disappointment and failure at the end of it.

But he was equally certain that in Sam and Joe Peck he had providentially encountered two of the outlaws who had been concerned in the latest hold-up, and who were, therefore, members, or, perhaps, now, ex-members of Cal Barclay's band of train-robbers.

By leaving Dick Hartly and Con Meyer in Denver with those two men, he would at least still have a tight hold upon one end of the trail he wished to follow.

What might come to him after his arrival in Kansas City he had no present means of determining.

If it were possible that Cal Barclay had once lived there under another name, and was now returning, after his exploits in the West, with his pockets well lined with money, then it was more than likely that he would somehow manage to see Mrs. Harry Pemberton, who was Sheriff Leonard's sister Clara, and who, Nick Carter had no doubt, had once, perhaps very long ago, been Cal Barclay's sweetheart, at a time when he was an honorable man and a gentleman.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PICTURE IN THE ALBUM.

Nick Carter arrived in Kansas City Sunday evening about half-past five o'clock, and, having in his possession the address of Mrs. Harry Pemberton, which had been given to him by her brother, the sheriff, he determined at once upon losing no time in making his researches, and, therefore, decided to call upon her that same evening.

He had amused himself during the trip from Denver to Kansas City by making numerous cartoon pictures with his pencil of Cal Barclay, as he remembered him at the time he had seen him so plainly in the mountain valley where Nick had once so narrowly escaped death.*

Among these pictures he had made, and there was half a score of them, he selected the one he considered the best, and, after carefully folding it, placed it in his pocket, destroying those that remained.

His first care upon arriving in the city was to seek the proprietor of one of the leading hotels, with whom he had a personal acquaintance, and through this man and by his efforts Nick was enabled before it was quite dark that evening, to procure an entire new outfit of clothing, so that when he did finally present himself at the house of Mrs. Harry Pemberton, he was arrayed as a gentleman should be for making a Sunday evening call.

To the servant who admitted him, and who said that Mrs. Pemberton was at home, he gave this message:

"Please tell Mrs. Pemberton that it is Mr. Carter who has called, and say also that I am lately arrived from an interview with her brother James, who is now sheriff of his county."

He was kept waiting only a very few moments before Mrs. Pemberton entered the room into which he had been shown.

She was a woman of striking beauty and presence. And Nick Carter did not wonder that a man such as he knew Cal Barclay to be might once have been passionately in love with her.

She came across the room with extended hands, her face lighted by a sunny smile, and she exclaimed:

"You have come from my brother James, and I can only say that I am delighted to see you, indeed."

Nick, who had risen to greet the woman, now resumed his seat; and then he explained:

"I met and made the acquaintance of your brother quite by accident, out in the mountains. During the talk that followed between us, he mentioned his sister, and he wished me particularly to bring pleasant messages to you for him if I were passing this way. But to tell you the truth, Mrs. Pemberton, I had another reason for calling upon you, and, lest you should suppose me entirely selfish in the matter, I had better explain it at once."

"Indeed?" she exclaimed, manifesting her surprise that this stranger should have business with her.

Nick withdrew from his pocket the picture he had made, but held it in his hand without unfolding it, while he continued:

"I have here, Mrs. Pemberton, a very rudely made drawing. It represents fairly well the features of a man whom I am anxious to find. I think he once lived in Kansas City, but I am not sure. Your brother, the sheriff, was quite positive that if he ever had lived here and was in society, you would remember him."

"I think it quite likely," she said. "Let me see the picture."

*See NICK CARTER WEEKLY, No. 614.

The detective had opened the folds of the drawing he had made, and was holding it face downward. Now he turned it about suddenly and thrust it under the eyes of his companion, with a quick motion, watching her narrowly as he did so, to discover if there were any sign of a surprised start when she should see it.

And there was one.

It was so small a start and so nearly imperceptible, that Nick Carter would not have noticed it at all had he not been watching keenly; but, nevertheless, it was there.

Beyond this fact, however, there was no evidence in the woman's face that she had any recollection whatever of the features in the picture she saw there, and after scrutinizing it for a moment with apparent serious intensity, she raised her eyes to his and with a wondering expression in them said:

"No, sir; I have no recollection of such a person at all."

"I think," said Nick, refolding the picture and returning it to his pocket, as if he were entirely satisfied with her statement, "that your brother once wrote to you, in one of his letters, quite an extended account of this same man."

"Yes," she said, "I remember it;" and then she bit her lip savagely, and flushed, for she realized instantly what a mistake she had made.

Nick, however, appeared not to notice it, so that she was presently reassured; but all the same he had additional evidence now, and enough to convince him of its truth, that he was indeed on the right track.

For it will be remembered that this young matron had left her brother's letter in which he had referred to Cal Barclay a long time unanswered, notwithstanding the fact that until then it had ever been her habit to answer without delay. Again, when she did answer it, she professed to have mislaid the letter and to have partly forgotten its contents, and she ignored entirely the subject of the man about whom her brother inquired, pretending thus utterly to have forgotten it.

Here, however, was evidence, not only that she had not forgotten it, but that it had not passed from her mind since then, for she had recalled the circumstance of her brother's inquiry, instantly, when Nick Carter reminded her of it.

"Do you remember whom it was your brother inquired about?" asked the detective, after having given her sufficient opportunity to recover from her momentary confusion because of the slip she had made.

"Oh, yes," she replied.

"I wonder," said Nick, "if he really told you who the man was."

"Yes."

"Did he tell you that it was one Cal Barclay, the outlaw and train-robber?"

"Yes," she smiled back at him, "it was that fact that led him to ask me the questions he did about him."

"It was your brother James' idea, Mrs. Pemberton, that this man Barclay, the outlaw and train-robber, had once been a resident of this city, when he was a gentleman and a member of good society; and that he had known you at that time."

She nodded brightly and replied:

"Yes, so he told me."

"Your brother James thought, because of his own resemblance to you, that Barclay recognized him at the time he described in his letter."

"Oh, I remember it all perfectly. But you see, Mr. Carter, there must be some mistake, because I have not the slightest recollection of the face of the man you are showing me; if that is indeed the man."

"Yes," said Nick, "that is the man."

"And do you also think that he was formerly a resident of Kansas City?"

"I don't know, madam; but that's what I am endeavoring to determine."

"You are seeking him?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because he is an outlaw and a fugitive from justice, while I am a detective and by profession a man who pursues criminals."

"Really; one would not have supposed you to be a detective, Mr. Carter."

"No? Why not?"

"Well, you see, one supposes that detectives are rather objectionable persons. I do not find you so at all."

Nick laughed outright at this, for she made the remark with an arch air that rendered it utterly impossible for him to take offense; nor did she intend any.

They were seated in the parlor of the house, and partly between them was an old-fashioned marble-top center-table like those that were in use very generally half a century ago. Upon this table was another old-fashioned affair, no more or less than a plush-bound album of enormous size.

Nick reached out his hand and took the album from the table, opening it near the middle and spreading it across his knees.

She saw the act and started forward with a slight gasp, instantly, however, recovering herself and resuming her former attitude.

Nick pretended not to have noticed either of these acts.

He continued to talk and idly turned the thick leaves of the album, dropping hasty and apparently cursory glances at the pictures he was passing, as he did so.

He saw that she was watching him with intensity; he saw, too, that she had suddenly become strangely nervous, and that her hands were clutching tightly the arms of the chair upon which she was seated.

He had turned half a dozen of the leaves of the album in this manner when, upon glancing down, he saw a face staring at him, the appearance of which startled him into sudden rigidity.

However, he permitted nothing of this fact to show in his face or attitude, but he kept the album open where it was, and with the palm of his hand resting across the face of the photograph; and in that position he continued the idle talk into which they had dropped, as if quite naturally.

He could see that she was now watching his every act with the closest kind of scrutiny, and presently, when he turned the leaves again, apparently without having noticed the picture that had been covered by his hand, he was conscious of the fact that she breathed a sigh of relief as if a certain danger that menaced her had passed.

But Nick was all the time keeping his left hand between the leaves of the album where that telltale photograph was located, and he was only waiting the right opportunity to return to it.

The picture he had seen in that one quick glance, as nearly as he could determine, was unmistakably the same face he had drawn with a pencil on the sheet of paper he had shown to Mrs. Pemberton, save that it was much younger in years, and that it wore an entirely different expression from that which he remembered to have been a prominent characteristic of Cal Barclay's physiognomy.

But it must be remembered that Nick Carter's professional life was such that he always carried faces indelibly upon his recollection. Faces had been his study since his early youth, and he remembered them always, not as you and I remember the faces we know collectively, but feature by feature.

A face to Nick Carter, when he photographed it upon his mind, meant the expression and shape of the eyes, the shape of the nose and curve of the nostrils, the curves of the lips, and the size of the features generally; the position and shape of the ears and the manner in which the hair grew upon the head and face, and the texture of it rather than its color or the way in which it was trimmed or dressed.

The woman had by now resumed her former position of ease upon the chair where she was sitting, but suddenly she was startled into alertness again by Nick Carter's throwing back the leaves of the album so that it lay open at the picture which had attracted him; and then he bent forward, looked at it a moment, after which he deliberately opened the drawing he had made and placed it beside the photograph.

Then he raised his eyes to Mrs. Pemberton's face to discover that she was staring at him with amazement and consternation plainly visible in her expression.

CHAPTER X.

ONE WOMAN'S OBSTINACY.

The detective smiled at Mrs. Pemberton when he saw how intently and in what a startled manner she was gazing at him, and he said:

"I have found here a photograph, Mrs. Pemberton, which reminds me greatly of the man whose picture I so badly attempted to draw. Will you tell me something about this gentleman, please?"

As he asked the question he turned the album about and held it under her eyes in order that she might see the photograph properly.

But she still kept her gaze riveted upon his, and did not once lower her eyes toward the picture to which he had drawn her attention.

"Will you look at it, madam, and tell me who it is?" he asked her again.

Instead of doing so, she rose slowly to her feet, straightening herself to her full height, which was not very great, she being a diminutive woman. She was rather magnificent in the attitude of offended dignity which she now assumed, although she did it with a certain lack of assurance which told Nick Carter quite plainly that it was all the result of acting.

"I think, Mr. Carter," she said coldly, "that I will have to ask you to excuse me now. I have other engagements for the evening, and I fear that it will be impossible to detain you any longer."

This was a dismissal bluntly given, only for the fact that Nick Carter did not choose to take it so. However, he changed his method at once and came directly and bluntly to the point of the reason for his visit there.

"Mrs. Pemberton," he said, "I am an officer of the law. The man whose picture I showed you in the drawing I have made is an outlaw, a thief, and several times a murderer. Only a few nights ago, in company with his gang of outlaws, he held up and robbed a train on the S. M. & U. railroad, and stole from the safe in the express-car a sum of money amounting nearly to a million dollars. This man has made several boasts during his career as a train-robber, and an all-around outlaw. One of these boasts was that he had fixed his high-water mark at a million dollars, and that when he found himself possessed of that sum he would retire into respectability, live in a city where none of his Western associates could find him, and enjoy the rather questionable fruits of the fortune he had so dishonestly gained. Another of his boasts had been that he was reared, educated, and trained a gentleman, and that if he returned to the scene of his former home he would be accepted in the best society, and at once become hail-fellow-well-met in the most exclusive set. Still another boast that he has made"—and here we must admit that Nick Carter was going far beyond the knowledge he possessed, and was merely guessing—"is to the effect that when he was a member of that exclusive set in the high society I have mentioned, he loved and was loved by a very beautiful young woman, whose name we need not mention and which——"

He stopped suddenly, for she had taken a quick step toward him and was bending forward with flashing eyes and clenched hands, while she exclaimed:

"How dare you!"

Nick pretended very great astonishment.

He drew back quickly and gazed with the assumption of utter amazement into her angry eyes, while he replied calmly:

"Why, Mrs. Pemberton, what do you mean? Have I offended you?"

"Didn't you just insinuate that that train-robber and murderer whom you are talking about was once in love with me?" she cried out.

"My dear Mrs. Pemberton," he exclaimed. "How could you think me guilty of such a transgression as that?"

Then suddenly becoming stern, he continued:

"But, madam, your manner now tells me that it is so. Your manner told me, when first I opened the album at that picture"—and he rested his hand upon it—"that you had known all the time whose face it was I showed you in the drawing I had made. Your manner has told me many times since that instant, that you were perfectly well aware whom I was discussing; and now, Mrs. Pemberton, I ask you to tell me what you know about that man. I ask you to tell me what his name was when you knew him."

She had started back at his change of manner and attitude, but now she faced him defiantly again, although with more composure, as she answered with cool insolence:

"I will tell you nothing, sir."

"Am I to understand that you decline positively to give me the information I seek?"

"You may understand whatever it pleases you to understand," she replied.

"Do you, madam, assume the responsibility of posing as a protector of such a villain as that man has become, merely because you knew him well while he yet held some claim to manhood?"

She made no reply to this, and after waiting a moment, he went on again:

"Do you know, Mrs. Pemberton, or will you believe me when I tell you, that the man about whom I am inquiring is now on his way to Kansas City, if he has not already arrived here?"

"Oh!" she gasped.

"It is true again, madam; he is on his way here to the place where he used to live. He is coming here with a million dollars of stolen money in his possession. He is coming here with a million dollars, every one of which reeks with blood, and shrieks aloud with crime. And he is coming here with that money, to reenter the society he deserted; he is coming back here to claim a position in that exclusive set to which I have just referred; he is coming back to claim you as an old acquaintance and an old friend, believing that, although his hands are stained with blood and his soul is blackened by the commission of a hundred crimes, he can perhaps sit beside you in your carriage, or induce you to sit beside him in his; he is coming back here believing that he can hold your hand again, as he did once, long ago; perhaps to remind you of the things he said to you then, if not to tell them to you over again. Do you, madam, want to resume a half-forgotten friendship with such a man as that? Do you wish to become, as it were, an accomplice in the awful crimes he has committed?"

She had shrunk backward while he was talking, for he spoke vehemently and rapidly, and with great earnestness.

And now she stood staring at him, clinging to the back of a chair she had grasped, while her breath came spasmodically; and it was plainly to be seen that she was terrorized by the picture the detective had drawn.

"Oh, no, no, no!" she breathed brokenly.

Nick pointed his finger at the picture in the album which he had put down upon a chair beside him, and he demanded:

"Mrs. Pemberton, who is that man?"

Again she straightened up as if to defy him, and she replied:

"I cannot—I will not tell you!"

"Who is that man?" he repeated.

This time she only shook her head.

"Mrs. Pemberton, don't you realize that I will find him, whether you assist me or not? Don't you understand that he cannot escape me? Don't you understand that if he returns to this city, as he will do, if he has not done so already, that I will find him within a few hours of his arrival? Don't you realize that I will arrest him and put him in jail, and that ultimately he will be tried before a court of law for the crimes he has committed? And now, finally, cannot I make you comprehend that if you decline to give me the information I seek, you force me into the position of compelling you, by means of the subpœna, to give the testimony I want and stand in need of? And now, lastly, Mrs. Pemberton, can't I make you see the futility of your effort to avoid telling me what you know? And won't you let me persuade you that it is much better that you should tell me, in order that I may protect you, instead of threatening you?"

He paused for an instant, and, when she did not reply, he went a step nearer to her.

"Mrs. Pemberton," he said, with an entire change of tone and speaking with all the kindliness of spirit that he could assume. "It is not at all necessary that your name should ever in any way be connected with, or associated with, this man and his case, unless you persist in your refusal to assist me. I am convinced that what he has done in the way of transgressing the law has been done since you had any knowledge of the man, personally. Believe me, madam, the way I open up for you is the best way. Be frank with me and you will not regret it, but if you continue to refuse me the information I seek, there are ways and means of obtaining it which may become extremely unpleasant. Please think over what I have said. I will wait while you do so."

He turned away from her, picking up the album as he did so, and striding with it across the room to the window; and there with his back toward her he deftly removed the photograph that had attracted him and transferred it to his pocket; then he closed the album.

reclasped it, and returned it to the table in the center of the room where he had found it originally.

The woman was standing where he had left her.

She had apparently not changed her attitude, and now he approached her again.

"Mrs. Pemberton," he said kindly, "have you nothing to say to me?"

"Nothing whatever," she replied.

"Will you not give me the information I seek?"

"No."

"Will you tell me nothing at all about that man?"

"I will tell you nothing."

"Shall I call again to-morrow in the forenoon, say at ten or eleven o'clock?"

"No, for I will not receive you if you do call."

"Have you thought over all I have said to you?"

"I have nothing to say upon the subject whatever."

"Don't you think it possible that you may have changed your opinion by to-morrow?"

"I will never change it."

"Is there nothing to say or do to move you from your determination?"

"No."

"I am stopping at the Coates House. My full name is Nicholas Carter. If you should change your mind before noon to-morrow, will you send for me there?"

"I shall not change my mind."

He turned about and picked up his hat, then crossed the room to the door where he stopped again.

"Mrs. Pemberton," he said, "if I have seemed harsh and somewhat severe during this interview, it was because it was rendered necessary by your attitude. It was also because I believed it to be, and I still so believe, for your own good that I was so. I beg of you, before to-morrow noon, to reconsider your determination and to send for me. Good night."

CHAPTER XI.

AN AMAZING DISCOVERY.

Nick Carter was not without very many friends in Kansas City.

He had visited there often and had been entertained very frequently, with the result that his acquaintance was wide and diversified.

When he went out from the house where Mrs. Pemberton lived, which was located on Oak Street, he walked rapidly down that thoroughfare until he came to Twelfth Street, which he followed to Broadway, and so turned again toward the Coates House.

The clerk who was on duty at the desk when he entered the hotel was also among Nick Carter's oldest acquaintances in the city, and after waiting a moment until this man was disengaged, Nick approached and called him to one side.

"Tommy," he said, "I have a photograph in my pocket which I wish to show you, believing that because you have lived in this town all your life you will recognize it."

"Very well, Mr. Carter," was the reply. "Let's see it."

"Wait just a moment, Tommy. Before I show it to you, I have a few more words to say about it."

"Very well."

"I want you, in case you recognize the picture, to tell me the man's name, and when he left the city if you know about it. I also want you to tell me, as nearly as you can, where he is now, or where he is likely to be found; and also if you have heard rumors of his expected return here, or have heard it said by anybody that he has already returned."

"Gracious!" exclaimed the clerk. "You seem to be mighty particular about it."

"I am, Tommy; and just one more thing before I show the picture to you. I don't want you to mention the fact to any person whatever, that you have seen the picture, or even that the man has been inquired about. Will you agree to that?"

"Sure; wasn't I always ready to help you when I could?"

Nick withdrew the picture from his pocket and placed it in the hotel clerk's hands.

"There it is," he said. "Now, tell me what you know about it."

Instead of manifesting anything like concern about his instant recognition of the features of the man whose picture Nick Carter showed him, the clerk burst into a hearty laugh.

"Why!" he exclaimed. "Don't you know who that is?"

"No," said Nick. "If I did, I wouldn't ask you."

"That's Harry Pemberton," was the amazing announcement.

"What!" exclaimed Nick Carter, for once surprised out of his usual reserve.

It came to him like a blow in that instant, that he had been discussing with that poor woman in Oak Street no less a person than her own husband, and that he had denounced him in a manner he would not have thought of doing had he so much as guessed the truth.

It was an amazing circumstance anyway he chose to view it.

To go back to the interview he had with young Leonard out there in the Rocky Mountains, it was an amazing circumstance if it were true, that Leonard had not known his own brother-in-law at the time of the interview the sheriff had described.

But as Nick thought about it, he could not doubt the sincerity of Leonard in the matter, and it occurred to him then, while he stood before the clerk, leaning against the hotel desk, that, perhaps, there was more to this mystery than he had imagined, and he said to the man:

"Can't you step off at one side with me where we won't be interrupted, and tell me the story of Harry Pemberton?"

It so happened that he could do so, and a moment later he conducted Nick into the private office behind the desk, and, having offered him a cigar, said:

"Why, Harry Pemberton used to be one of the rich young bloods of this town, Mr. Carter. Nobody ever thought he would set the world afire; that is, he wasn't considered to be overburdened with brains; but he was a good fellow, and everybody liked him. He married a Miss Clara Leonard, who used to be considered one of the beauties of the city. She lives over in Oak Street now."

"Where is he?" asked Nick.

"Wait, Mr. Carter, let me tell you the story in my own way."

"All right, go on."

"Harry's people all died within two or three years of one another, and the result was that he suddenly found himself possessed of quite a large fortune, which he proceeded to spend just about as fast as he could. He gambled, and lost. He speculated widely and deeply, and lost. Everything he touched seemed to turn to dirt and mud, instead of into gold; and finally, save for the settlement he had made upon his wife, he went broke."

"How long ago was that?"

"Let me see," said the clerk, "that was about twelve years ago when he disappeared. It was right after he went broke, and he had been married at that time, approximately three years."

"Hasn't he been back since?" asked Nick.

"Oh, yes. I've heard that he has been back here two or three times. I have heard, too, that he sometimes sends money to his wife; but those are merely rumors about which I have no authentic information."

"You haven't heard anything about him lately?"

"No; not for two or three years."

"Didn't Mrs. Pemberton have a brother whose first name was James?"

"Yes, but he was a little kid when Harry Pemberton went away. Jimmy himself left the city about six years ago. I think he is somewhere in the West now."

"It isn't likely that young Leonard would remember much about his brother-in-law?"

"No, Mr. Carter, I don't think he would know him by sight. Let's see, Jimmy must be about twenty-four years old now, and that would leave him twelve when Harry Pemberton went away. Jimmy and his sister had lost their parents and Jimmy was away at boarding-school from the time he was eight, so I doubt if he knew anything about Harry Pemberton, at all."

This then explained one of the seeming incongruities of the circumstance which was truly amazing, viewed from any standpoint it might please one to adopt.

Nick Carter felt that he had never been placed in quite such a predicament. He would not for the world have called upon that poor woman as he had done, and questioned her as he did; or have denounced the man as he was compelled to do, had he been able even to surmise the relationship existing between her and the man whom he knew as Cal Barclay.

"When do you suppose that picture was taken, Tommy?" he asked the clerk presently.

"I should think, to judge from its appearance, about the time he went away," was the reply. "It might have been a year or two before that; but it looks about as he did then."

Nick restored the picture to his pocket, at the same time removing therefrom the drawing he had made with his pencil. This he opened and gave into the hands of the clerk.

"Would you recognize that picture as being Harry Pemberton?" he asked.

The clerk gazed long and earnestly upon it, finally nodding his head with emphatic gesture.

"Yes, I would," he said; "but there has been a very great change in the man since he left here, if this is meant for him."

"Still, you are sure that you recognize it? That you could positively identify it?"

"Oh, yes, I'm quite sure of that."

"Supposing I had first shown you that picture instead of the other one, and that Harry Pemberton's name had not been mentioned between us, do you think that you would have recognized it?"

"I am sure of it."

"Then there can be no doubt in your mind, Tommy, whatever, that the man whose picture you now hold in your hand—it is a drawing that I made myself—is Harry Pemberton?"

"None whatever."

Nick Carter refolded the picture and returned it to his pocket.

"I'm much obliged to you, Tommy," he said. "You have given me quite a shock. I had no idea when I came in here to ask you these questions, that they would develop into this astounding revelation. I think I must go out again and make another call to-night."

"It's rather late, isn't it, for a call? It's ten o'clock."

"Five minutes to ten," said Nick, correcting him. "Yet I think I will make it; and, by the way, Tommy, if by any chance Harry Pemberton should arrive in the city to-night and should stop at this hotel, please remember the caution I gave you in the beginning, and do not let him know that he has been the subject of any inquiry."

"Oh, I won't forget, Mr. Carter. But, anyhow, he won't come here. If he should arrive in Kansas City, you can rely upon it that he would go directly to his wife's home, which is in Oak Street, as I told you."

The detective nodded and turned away, and a moment later passed swiftly from the hotel upon the street and took his way to Mrs. Pemberton's home in Oak Street, for he had determined to have one more interview with her that night.

He saw, as he approached the house, that there was a bright light shining beyond the curtains of the parlor windows, and he hesitated for quite a time be-

fore he rang the bell, for it suddenly occurred to him like a premonition of impending denouement that Harry Pemberton was already inside that house, and that he had arrived there, doubtless, within the last half-hour.

Presently, however, he decided that the way he had chosen was the best one. He rang the bell, and then stepped aside into the shadow while he awaited a response to it.

It came presently; the door was thrown widely ajar, and Nick Carter stepped quickly forward, passing into the hall before he uttered a word, thus obviating any possibility of being refused admittance.

It was the same servant who had admitted him before, and because the negro recognized in Nick Carter the same gentleman who had been there so recently, he stepped aside, bowing for the detective to pass him, and indicating by a gesture the door which Nick Carter knew opened upon the parlor where he had held the interview with Clara Pemberton.

Instantly resolved that the boldest way was the best under the circumstances, Nick Carter stepped forward, placed his hand upon the knob of the door and pushed it open; and then he stepped swiftly into the room, closing the door behind him.

A man and a woman were there, and the woman, as Nick entered, leaped to her feet with a sharp cry of pain; the man started forward with a quick motion, so that the detective, before he could realize it, found himself gazing into the muzzle of a big Colt forty-five.

CHAPTER XII.

A WIFE'S SENTENCE.

Although there was a very great change in the personal appearance of the man whom we have known as Cal Barclay, Nick Carter had no difficulty in recognizing him on the instant.

It was the same tall outlaw whose careless indifference over the fate of the child, Dallas Brennan, up there in the valley in the mountains, and whose utter lack of interest over the terrible fate that hung over Nick Carter, had so impressed the detective on the occasion of their first meeting.*

But now, all the uncouthness and roughness of that time had disappeared.

The man who now stood in the drawing-room with a pistol leveled at the detective's head was tall, elegant, handsome, and refined in appearance; his face, which had formerly worn a closely cropped beard and mustache, was now clean shaven, and it would have been difficult for any one other than as experienced a person as Nick Carter was to have recognized in this man the train-robber and outlaw of the Rocky Mountains.

*See NICK CARTER WEEKLY, No. 614.

There was no doubt that Barclay had relied upon this fact to carry him through the desperate game he had just attempted, and which would doubtless have succeeded had it not been for Nick Carter.

But if he were so changed outwardly—and, notwithstanding the fact that the mountain outlaw had become a society gentleman in the interim—he was the same cool, collected, and cautious desperado that he had always been, in fact.

There was not the quiver of an eyelash, or the movement of a muscle in his face, as he held the weapon in his hand with the barrel pointed at Nick Carter's heart.

In fact, there was the suggestion of a smile in his eyes, and on his face, which half-parted his lips, so that his white teeth glistened between them; and he stood firmly erect, thoroughly in possession of all his faculties, coolly determined to meet whatever circumstances he might be confronted with.

For a moment the two men stood as we have pictured them, facing each other, while just beyond the tall form of the outlaw the woman cowered, with her hands clasped tightly together, her face drawn and haggard, and her whole attitude one of utter despair.

For a period of time that might have occupied a full minute, or even more, there was utter silence in the room; and this was broken at last by the gentlemanly outlaw, who remarked as if he were uttering the most stereotyped commonplace of a society function:

"I think, Mr. Carter, that this is the second time I have had the pleasure of meeting you."

"Quite so," replied the detective, no less master of himself than was the man he confronted.

"May I inquire," asked the outlaw, "how you succeeded in trailing me here to this house?"

"It is a long story," replied Nick, "and, as a matter of fact, I did not trail you to this house; but if you will recall a little episode which happened only lately in your career, when you met a young sheriff of one of the counties in the State you have infested, and recognized in him the brother of your wife, you will, perhaps, understand how I have succeeded in putting two and two together as a result of a conversation I had with him, later."

"I see," said the outlaw.

"I deduced from what you said to that young man, that you had known him somewhere before; or, at least, that he so closely resembled some one whom you had known, that you recognized who he was; or, rather, who he must be."

"Quite right, Carter; quite right. I declare you're smarter than I thought you were."

"I had the impulse, then," went on the detective, "to come at once to Kansas City, after I have had my talk with James Leonard; but, instead of doing that, I followed along on your trail through the cañon that leads down to the Horseshoe, until I met two of your disbanded men."

"You don't mean to say that they betrayed me?"

smiled the outlaw, still holding his weapon rigidly in place.

"Oh, no; and I doubt if they could have done so, even if they so wished. But they did drop information without realizing that they did so, which I pieced together with such good effect that it finally brought me here."

"Very excellent detective work, I should call that, Carter."

The cold insolence of the man was remarkable. Nick read from it, and from his manner as he spoke, nothing less than a determination on his part that one of them at least should not leave that room alive.

"You were here only a little while ago, my wife tells me," said the outlaw.

"Yes," replied Nick; and ignoring the weapon which was still pointed at him, he turned toward the woman who had now straightened herself somewhat, and who was listening to the talk of the two men, and said:

"Madam, I owe you a very sincere apology for many of the things I said to you while I was here, and for my manner and method in saying them. I wish you to know that I am extremely sorry. I wish you to understand that I had no idea then that you were this man's wife. If I had any supposition at all, I supposed that Harry Pemberton, your husband, was in the city, and, perhaps, in the house, all the while I was talking with you. No such idea as that Cal Barclay, the outlaw, and Harry Pemberton, your husband, were one and the same person ever entered even remotely my mind. I would not have spoken to you as I did had I known. I hope you will forgive me."

She made no reply, but the outlaw did.

"Come, Carter," he exclaimed, "I call that pretty decent of you. If you'll just say the word, and declare a truce between us for a few minutes, agreeing to take no advantage over me while it lasts, I'll put this gun out of sight and we'll talk it over."

"Very well," said Nick. "I agree."

The outlaw pulled a magnificent gold watch from his pocket, sprung the case open, glanced at the dial, and asked:

"For how long shall we say, Carter? Fifteen minutes? Shall we have the truce last fifteen minutes?"

"Yes," said Nick. "I think that will be quite long enough."

"And Carter, what happens when the truce is over? Do I resume the same advantage I now have over you?"

The detective shrugged his shoulders; then he laughed.

"I suppose that is only fair," he said.

The outlaw lowered the hammer of his gun and quickly concealed the weapon inside the pocket from which he had taken it, after which he sank lazily upon a chair and produced two cigars from his waistcoat pocket, and proffered one of them to Nick.

"No, thank you," replied the detective. "I have one of my own; and, besides, I do not care to smoke just now."

"Well, Carter, I'm sorry you came to Kansas City," said the outlaw, with a meditative manner. "You see, all of my plans would have worked out beautifully had you not done so, for I had managed to keep in touch with my wife all these years, while I have been seeking a fortune by means and ways you know about, and which now, I regret to say, you have revealed to her. She did suppose that I had committed some sort of a crime which was more the fault of my weaknesses as she formerly understood them, than because of a criminal nature, and a propensity for reckless wrong-doing. Some little time ago I wrote to her that I had made my fortune at last, and that so soon as I could close up my business I would join her and we would go to Europe and spend the next eight or ten years of our lives in travel. But you see, do you not, that you have wrecked all these plans? I don't care so much, Carter, for my own sake; but I regret it very deeply on her account. Clara had an abiding faith in me until you appeared here this evening and revealed my true character in a manner and by words which she could not doubt—which she was forced to believe. And so, when I came, perhaps half an hour before your return, I found, instead of the loving wife I had expected, a frozen image with a broken heart inside of it.

"I cannot, of course, say that it is your fault, Carter. It is not so, for it is my own. And yet if you knew me better than you do, you would perhaps realize how deeply I regret the necessity for what you have done.

"When I entered the house a little bit ago, Clara received me with horror, instead of with the affection I expected; and when you came she had just finished telling me the story of your recent call. Too bad, Carter! too bad! too bad!"

During all this speech the poor woman, who was the real victim of it, seemed to hang upon the words the outlaw uttered; and now she went across the room to his side, got upon her knees, and, flinging her arms out across his lap, hid her face in them, and sobbed.

It was a harrowing scene for Nick Carter, for he could not escape the thought that in a great degree he was responsible for it.

Had he acted differently, had he but taken a little more time for thought and action, the sharpness of the woman's suffering might have been avoided, at least, to a great extent.

"How did you discover that I was Harry Pemberton?" asked the outlaw, stroking the head that was bowed upon his lap.

"By means of this photograph," said Nick, removing it from his pocket and laying it upon the album on the center-table. "I showed it to the clerk at the hotel. He recognized it, and I knew then what I had done. I returned to this house only to make suitable apologies to Mrs. Pemberton, and I can assure you that it did not occur to me that I would find you here until I had mounted the steps to the front door, outside."

"Oh, I believe you, Carter. I believe that you are entirely sincere in all you say. It isn't myself I'm considering; it's this little woman, here, with the broken heart."

"I know," said Nick. "I am very sorry that it has happened so."

"Carter, there's just one thing that I would like to tell you about myself."

"Very well, let's hear it."

"You told Clara, while you were talking to her here, that I was an outlaw, a train-robber, a thief, and many times a murderer, did you not?"

"I believe I used words to that effect; yes."

"Well, they were all true, Carter, save the last part of your accusation, for I can tell you truly that I have never killed a single man in my life. I've had the appearance of doing so. I've been charged with doing so over and over again, and I have never denied it; but the truth is the truth, and, as I sit before you now with the head of this sobbing woman on my lap, I swear I never have killed a human being."

Somehow Nick Carter realized that the man was telling the truth, and with more feeling than he realized he was expressing, he exclaimed:

"I am glad of that, Cal Barclay!"

"Thank you, Carter; I see that you believe me."

"Yes, I believe you."

"And now, Carter, for her sake, for this little woman's sake, here, don't you think that we can come to some sort of terms?"

"What sort of terms?"

"Couldn't you agree to let me disappear? to permit me to escape and take her with me?"

The detective shook his head.

"Not even if I make restitution of the money——"

"Under no circumstances, Pemberton; it is utterly impossible. I have my own honor in the matter to consider. I have a duty to perform from which I cannot escape. I regret now, since the circumstances are what they are, that I ever took this matter in hand at all. I regret that I am here and that I have a duty, nay, many duties, to fulfil."

What more might have been said between the men will never be known, for at that moment Clara Pemberton slowly raised herself to her feet, and, turning, confronted Nick Carter.

"Let me speak now for a moment," she said, and then she stepped backward until she stood beside her husband and she rested her left hand upon his shoulder while she continued:

"Mr. Carter, you just now made an apology to me which I accept fully, in the spirit in which it was made. I have listened to all you two men have said here in my presence, *and I know what it is best for you to do.*"

She turned and faced her husband and added, looking into his eyes:

"And, Harry, I know what is best for you to do."

She turned her gaze again to Nick Carter, and went on in the same calm tone:

"My husband has said that he only considers me now, and in reply to that I say to you that I believe he loves me. I believe he will do what I advise, if I promise to love him always, to the end, no matter what he has been; and if I can find it in my heart to forgive him for everything he has done in the past. Therefore, Mr. Carter, I promise you now, in his name while he listens to me and agrees with me, that he will take the revolver from his pocket and hand it over to you." (Pemberton pulled the gun from his pocket and passed it to the detective.) "That he will go with you from this house when you are ready to depart. That he will take the train with you at the Union Station. That he will travel with you back to the scene of his crimes. That he will go before a court of justice with you and there confess all that he has done. That he will give himself up to the law, receive his sentence for his misdeeds, and take his punishment in prison, cheerfully, because he knows that when he shall be out again I will be waiting at the door to receive him, and I will have a greater and a deeper love for him at that moment, when it comes, than I ever have had, or that I ever could have had, were the anguish of this moment less than it actually is."

She stopped and turned, facing her husband, and Harry Pemberton rose slowly to his feet, straightened himself, and said, with the same cool firmness with which he would have defied Nick Carter ten minutes earlier:

"You have heard my sentence, Carter, and I accept it cheerfully. I am ready to go back with you whenever you shall say so."

There is no more to be said here save the one duty of picking up a few scattered details.

The necessity for following the gang of outlaws that Barclay was supposed to have left behind him in the mountains, never arose because of the fact that they entirely disbanded and disappeared almost to the man when he deserted them. Morgan, the madman, died before Cal Barclay left the mountains.

A telegram sent by Nick Carter to Hartly and Meyer, in Denver, apprised them of the turn events had taken, and the consequence was that a few days later, when Nick Carter arrived in the office of President Prentiss of the railroad, accompanied by Harry Pemberton and his wife, he found the two cow-punchers awaiting him there.

Pemberton gave himself up exactly as has been already outlined, and the express company and others recovered the greater part of the money they had lost.

Pemberton confessed to his crimes in open court; still, however, under the name of Cal Barclay; and was sentenced to a term of imprisonment, during which his wife went to the home of her brother, James Leonard, to live with him until her husband should be liberated.

THE END.

The next number, 646, will be "Nick Carter's Submarine Chase; or, The Water Ferret of the Chesapeake."

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NEW YORK, October 10, 1908.

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ADRIFT AT SEA.

Morning has come again, and one after another of the people rouse up and comprehend the fact. The bo's'n is the only one having the strength and ambition to stand up and look around the glassy sea for sight of a sail.

This is the twelfth day since we left the burning ship—the ninth since we lost sight of the other boats. Seven men, three women, and two children—twelve of us—crowded into one boat, with the bo's'n in charge.

Twelve days ago the Cape of Good Hope was due west and twelve hundred miles away. The three days' gale drove us to the north, and separated the boats. Then came the calm—eight days of heaving and drifting under a sun which burns and blisters like a veritable ball of fire.

"Water! Give me water!"

That was the cry on every lip, even from the strongest of the seamen. We had only a few gallons as we pulled away from the burning ship. It is always thus when a great danger menaces—there is excitement, and haste, and neglect. It had been dealt out sparingly, grudgingly, almost drop by drop, but it was gone three days ago. It was thus with the food—the last crumbs given to the children with the last drops of water.

Some of us languidly watched the bo's'n as he stood on the thwart and slowly turned about to scan the sea from every point. Some did not even look up. No one asked a question as the old man finally sat down. Men looked at each other, but it was with a vacant stare. The women sat with bowed heads. The children seemed to sleep, though moaning faintly at intervals.

No sail in sight. How could there be without a breath of air stirring? The same ball of fire creeping up out of the immensity of the Indian Ocean—the same glassy surface as far as the eye can travel. On the port quarter is a monster shark, which has maintained his position for four days; on the starboard quarter his mate. Their presence filled us with terror at first; now no one cares.

It is two hours since the sun came up. Not a word has been spoken. Of a sudden the mother of the little boy—a curly haired, blue-eyed boy of seven—lifts her head in sudden alarm, and looks about her with eyes betraying the terror in her soul. I know the cause. She has read and heard of shipwrecks in mid-ocean—of boats drifting about until food and water were gone—of men and women casting lots to see who should die. Our food and water are gone. We are dying of hunger and thirst. She is holding the boy in her lap. She looks on his pale, pinched face, and her breath comes in gasps.

Now the mother of the little girl—a sunny-haired little thing scarce four years old—betrays the same fear. I am next to her. As our eyes meet I can read her thoughts; they are the thoughts of the other mother. Twelve days ago she was a handsome woman. This morning her face is so pinched, and drawn, and browned that I stare at her in amazement. There is fear in her eyes as she looks up at the bo's'n; the fear is replaced by a defiance as she glances at the others.

Mid-forenoon comes, but there is no change. No one has spoken—only two or three have changed their positions.

It is noon now, and one looking over the quarters might notice that the sharks had drawn a little nearer.

"Somebody has got to die! Do yo' hear me, bo's'n—we must cast lots to see who shall die!"

It was the black-whiskered, beetle-browed sailor whom I had noticed hungrily eying the little boy the day before. I said to myself, then, that he would be the first to clamor for a sacrifice. He had thrown off his stupor and risen to his feet, and as he shouted out his words his eyes glared like those of a hungry wolf.

"We'll wait another day, Daniel."

"Not another hour!" screamed the man.

"Aye, and that's me!"

"And me!"

"And me!"

There were four sailormen on their feet confronting the bo's'n—five sailors in all as the crew of the boat.

The bo's'n looked from man to man, and then his gaze was directed upon each passenger in turn. It had come suddenly, but he was not surprised. He had reasoned that it was only a question of time.

"Wait until sundown," he finally said.

"We'll either cast lots now, or I'll have one of the children!" shouted the black-whiskered man, and the others cried out after him that it was no use to wait longer.

The bo's'n stood up and took a long survey of the sea. Thirst and hunger and want of sleep had dimmed his vision. He rubbed his eyes again and again, and finally sat down with a groan, and said:

"Some one prepare the lots."

I handed the black-whiskered man an envelope from my pocket. He cut it into twelve strips and then shortened one of the strips and handed all to the bo's'n. The officer arranged them in his hand, with his back turned to us. By this time all were aroused and looking on. Even the children were awake and looking about in a queer, dazed way. As my eyes rested on them, and I noted how hunger and thirst had reduced them to skeletons, I laughed outright at the idea of one of them being sacrificed to keep the rest of us alive. A ship's rat would have more flesh on its bones.

"Me first!" said the black-whiskered man, as he reached out his hand.

The men drew, and as each one drew the others eyed him angrily. The childless woman came next. The women understood what was going on, but all were silent. There were four slips left.

"Now draw for yourself, and then for the boy," said the bo's'n, as he extended the slips and turned his face away.

The mother of the boy drew last of all, one of the slips was the short one.

"It was a fair draw—hand him over!" growled the black-whiskered man, as he gazed at her with the eyes of a human wolf.

For answer, the woman sprang up with the boy in her

arms, and, standing with one foot on a thwart and the other on the gunwale, she cried out:

"Don't you dare to touch us! We'll go to the sharks before you shall kill him!"

The monster shark on the port quarter drew alongside the boat, ready to seize his prey. For half a minute no one spoke, no one moved. Then the mother pointed and shrieked:

"See! See there!"

It was a great black steamship bearing down upon us, and not over a mile away. She might have been sighted two hours before, had the bo's'n's vision been keen.

When a boat came alongside, her crew needed no explanations. The women were in a dead faint, the children moaning, and of the men, some were weeping and some waving their arms and talking about green valleys and cold springs, and trees loaded with ripe fruit. The bo's'n sat with folded arms and closed eyes, and whispered that it was all a dream. The mate of the steamship's boat looked down upon us with a shudder of pity, and I heard him, like one afar off, saying to his crew:

"God pity the poor wretches and grant that we have come in time!"

HOW SPIDERS GO BALLOONING.

I had climbed up the side of a cañon in the Sierra Nevada, and sat looking up the green river that wound its way through the range, when my eye caught what appeared to be a dainty bit of lace floating along. On it came, so steadily that it seemed possessed with a certain intelligence, neither rising nor falling, as stray bits of chaff or down are wont to do, but moving in a direct line.

No sooner had it passed than another came into view, then another, and then all at once the space between the two banks seemed filled with the floating objects, which might have been the ghosts of fairies, so delicate were they.

As one floated quite near me, I put out my hand to catch it. Then I found that I had arrested a veritable balloon in its progress—an insect balloon, made by a delicate little aeronaut. I reached out and caught another.

It, too, was a balloon, and it dawned upon me that I was watching the passage of myriads of aeronauts that were being drawn up the narrow cañon by the current of air that flowed along so silently.

But who were the aeronauts? None other than spiders, each balloon being occupied by one; and I realized that it was a most remarkable race, in which thousands of balloonists were taking part.

As one of the delicate structures drifted against my arms the aeronaut stepped deftly from the car, and for a moment stood still, so that I had a rare chance to examine the dainty craft and navigator of the air.

The balloon was a ball, or rather platform, of fluffy web or silk that resembled spun glass, and quite large enough to afford the spider ample room to rest upon. This platform corresponded to the car or basket of a balloon.

As another ball came floating by I discovered attached to it a slender thread of silk that semed to be the supporting medium. It extended directly upward and bent in the breeze, forming a delicate perpendicular column, or sail.

The little insect crawled up to the highest point of my coat sleeve, then raising its spinnarets aloft, ejected a delicate thread. Every second it grew longer, and as it grew it rose directly upward, as if it was vastly lighter than the air.

Up it went, higher and higher every moment, until I judged it to be three feet long, and then a very curious thing occurred. The spider was almost lifted from his legs.

Another second passed, and then he appeared to be lifted again; then he turned and ran a few steps directly up the thread into the air; then turned again, and, head downward, sailed away. So the thread of silk was, in reality, the balloon.

The spider spins the thread out until the wind takes it and wafts it away. The fluffy platform is formed later during the flight, and, when complete, the aeronaut rests upon it as securely as the human aeronaut in his basket.

That the spider, a slow traveler, can make itself a balloon and journey across deep cañons and raging torrents is certainly an evidence, not only of its ingenuity, but of its intelligence.

PEARL-BREEDING.

The pearl-hunters of Borneo and adjacent islands have a peculiar superstition. When engaged in opening shells in search of pearls they take every ninth find, whether it be large or small, and put it into a bottle, which is kept tightly corked with a dead man's finger.

The pearls thus kept are known as "seed-pearls, or breeding pearls," the natives of the islands mentioned firmly believing that they will reproduce their kind. For every pearl put in the vial, two grains of rice are put in for the pearls to "feed" upon.

Some whites in Borneo believe as firmly in the superstition as the natives do, and almost every hut along the coast has its "dead-finger" bottle, with from nine to fifty "seed-pearls" and twice their number of rice grains carefully and evenly stowed away among them.

Nearly all the burial-places along the coast have been desecrated by "pearl-breeders" in search of corks for their bottles.

THE TELLTALE THUMB.

The thumb is a valuable index to the mental condition of its owner.

He who is in full possession of all his faculties makes good use of his thumb; but wherever there is a tendency to insanity this generally useful and active member falls out of work.

A physician in charge of a lunatic asylum states positively that if you see a person whose thumb remains inactive—standing at right angles, and taking no part in the act of writing, salutation, or any other manual exercise—you may be sure that he has a diseased mind. He may talk intelligently and appear sane in every respect, but undoubtedly a tinge of madness is lurking within his brain.

SPIDERS THAT TROT LIKE A HORSE.

As a rule, spiders are quite harmless to man, but one or two foreign species are capable of doing mischief. The great hairy spider of the South American pampas, for instance, has long, black, sickle-shaped jaws, which inflict severe wounds, and the effects of the poison are sometimes felt for many years after the bite is given.

But an even more objectionable spider is found on the same pampas. It is very large, very active, and of extraordinary bad temper. It not only resents any intrusion upon its domain, but objects even to any one looking over the hedge.

Men on horseback who ventured to approach within ten feet of it have been pursued for thirty yards, the spider keeping up with a trotting horse. This irritable individual is called "the king of spiders."

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